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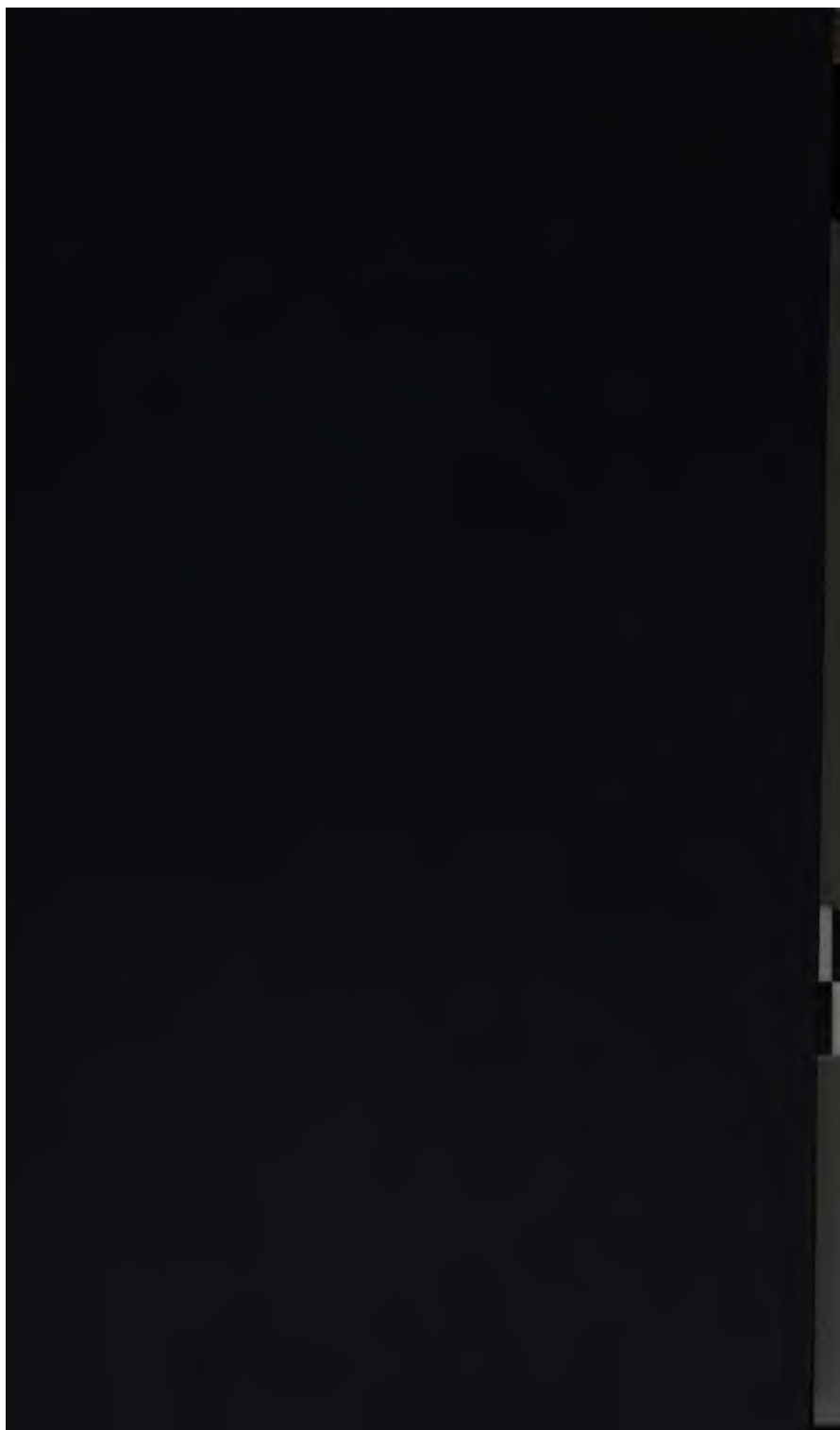
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THE
CABINET MINISTER.

VOL. III.

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THE
CABINET MINISTER.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF
"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS," "MRS. ARMYTAGE,"
"THE HEIR OF SELWOOD," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE
CABINET MINISTER.

CHAPTER I.

Deux coqs vivaient en paix ;
Une poule vint,—voilà la guerre allumée !
Amour !—tu perdis Troie !

LA FONTAINE.

OF the four persons assembled in that comfortable dining-room, but overpowered by discomfortable feelings, Lady Mary, if the least affected, was the most perplexed. Having already patched up a hollow peace with Frank and his betrothed bride, she knew not what countenance to assume towards the intruder against whom her son had vowed such deadly

vengeance. Unaware of the officious agency of Sir Robert Crewe in hastening to acquaint Frank Grenfell with his cousin's arrival, she could not conceive what had brought her nephew at so unseemly an hour to Hursley Park. It was only a few hours since they parted. "What was he at? Was his intent wicked or charitable?"

No one present would have found breath to answer her, had she adventured the question aloud. Poor Bessy sat growing paler and paler,—colder and colder; while, as her brother advanced cordially towards the table, Sir Henry slowly arose, and with a stern countenance, without noticing his salutation, inquired in a harsh contemptuous tone, "to what he was indebted for the pleasure of his company?"

The question, and the air with which it was spoken, amounted to an insult; and Sir Henry Woodbridge was a person so little in the habit of taking consequence upon himself, that any

assumption of hauteur on his part acquired double force of bitterness. Frank Grenfell had never seen his cousin address the lowest servant, or most offending enemy, in the mode by which he now chose to demonstrate to him that he had hitherto been on sufferance in that house, and would be suffered there no longer. He saw that Sir Henry was resolved to forget that his father's blood was flowing in the veins of the Grenfells. Henceforth they were aliens to him, and strangers within his gates.

Frank's expressive eyes flashed fire, and a vivid blush crimsoned his face. For his own share, and alone with Sir Henry, he would have met such treatment with either indifference or expostulation. But his sister, who was present, was of course included in the attack; and the anxious eyes of Lady Mary, and wondering stare of the servants, were fixed in vulgar amazement upon the scene. It was necessary therefore to draw up, and meet the

assault with consistency, if not dignity of demeanour.

“ I came hither,” he replied, struggling to recover his composure, “ in order to consult you, as my nearest relative, upon personal affairs, which I have a right to suppose interesting to my family. A couple of hours ago I was apprised by Sir Robert Crewe of your arrival at Hursley, and wished to be the first to acquaint you with the changes which have occurred since we met, in my position and prospects. I perceive that I am forestalled, and that you are offended. Be it so ! Your present mood is one with which I shall not pretend to argue ; and I congratulate you on the possession of a degree of worldly prosperity, which, placing you above obligation, secures you from the bitterness of knowing that there are insults which must not be resented.”

Bessy was satisfied. Her brother had spoken as she could wish ; and an involun-

tary start from Sir Henry evinced that the blow had struck home. Still, his wounded susceptibility maintained the ascendancy.

“There is nothing in my conduct which you are not perfectly at liberty to resent,” he replied. “As from this day forth I trust we shall live as strangers to each other, we cannot stand too soon upon the footing which best becomes us. I wish to remember nothing of past times, but the treachery of a person whom I have too long regarded as a friend.”

“My memory is not under such ready governance,” replied Frank. “I forget neither that I am speaking to my mother’s nephew, nor to a man towards whom I labour under heavy pecuniary obligation.”

“Thank God! such pitiful considerations are not ever uppermost in my mind,” replied Sir Henry with a sneer. “But there are such things as moral obligations, which, in my dealings with a friend, would under any circumstances forbid me the use of arts and

stratagems likely to lower me in his esteem, and that of every honest man."

"Woodbridge!" cried Frank, in a voice almost suffocated with emotion. But his sister, who had risen from table, and stood beside him, now laid her hand upon his arm, and, arresting the retort upon his lips, attempted to lead him from the room.

"No, no, Bessy! I will speak! I will denounce the want of generosity,—the want of soul,—which prompts him to trample me in the dust, for the involuntary crime of having been more successful than himself in engaging the affections of one whom for years it was his pleasure to treat with coldness and contempt!"

"My dear Frank, my dear brother!" cried Miss Grenfell, while her beseeching hands were clasped together, and the tears streamed unregarded down her cheeks,—“recollect yourself—be calm! Another time these misunderstandings will be cleared up.”

"No! now!" retorted Frank with a violence which he mistook for firmness; "for, as God is my judge, never, from this day forth, will I re-enter this house!"

A disdainful smile overspread the features of Sir Henry.

"From this day forth, my dear sister," resumed Grenfell, "never shall you taste the bread of those who despise us as dependents!"

"Pardon me, I cannot support you in an unjust accusation," interrupted Miss Grenfell. "If my cousin have any pique against you, it is as one man may entertain a quarrel against another, and without reference to your relative position. Another time, my dear brother, Sir Henry and yourself will be better able to understand each other."

And again she attempted to lead him from the room. But Francis Grenfell was by this time excited to the pitch of hysterical irritation, which force nor argument avail not to tranquilize, but which must exhaust itself in tears or

words. Neither Frank nor any one else could foresee the nature of those about to burst from his lips ; and it was therefore fortunate that Lady Mary, finding her prerogative in danger, saw fit to interfere.

“ You seem to forget, Mr. Grenfell,” said she, “ that your sister is at present submitted to no authority but mine. You talk of removing her from this house. Be pleased to recollect that, till the attainment of her majority in April next, Miss Grenfell is legally domiciliated under my protection. Whatever disputes may arise betwixt you and my son, I must request that poor Bessy may not be dragged into the quarrel, and rendered uncomfortable for the gratification of your ill-humour.”

In Miss Grenfell’s opinion, never had Lady Mary spoken so much to the purpose. Many a wiser woman would have interfered with less avail. The attention of the belligerents was distracted from each other, and they had time

to feel that a family division, such as they were meditating, must involve the welfare of others in its consequences, and hold up their own petulance in derision to the world.

Frank was the least philosophical of the party, because the most angry; but even he recovered his discretion sufficiently to obey his sister's impulse for his immediate departure, saying only in a firm tone to Sir Henry Woodbridge as he moved towards the door, "You shall hear from me to-morrow."

A loud shriek from Lady Mary accompanied his exit from the room. Deeply read in the mysteries of the Minerva Press, her ladyship fancied that this simple announcement implied a challenge to her son.

"Stop him!" cried she. "Benton, Smith, John, Thomas; stop Mr. Grenfell, — detain him! he wants to murder your young master!" and her outcries would have given an almost ludicrous turn to the affair, but for the burst of hysterical tears avouching her terrors to be

real. Sinking back in her chair, while heavy sobs panted from her expansive bosom, Lady Mary gave free course to her passion, and Miss Grenfell was obliged to remain and administer restoratives to her aunt ; while Sir Henry dismissed the servants summoned from the vestibule by her ladyship's ejaculations, by desiring them, with his usual composure, to attend Mr. Grenfell, and bring round his horse.

By the time Lady Mary recovered her self-possession sufficiently to be made sensible of Frank's departure, the offender was literally beyond reach ; and as Sir Henry had resumed his seat, his temper, and complexion, the cause of alarm was no longer immediate. Alone with Bessy in the drawing-room, however, all her terrors seemed to return ; and, as it was always easy to her to control her violence where her interests were at stake, her anxiety for her son's safety determined her to attempt none but conciliatory measures towards the Grenfells.

“ I know they will fight—I am sure they

will fight !" whined her ladyship with a dolorous countenance ; while Bessy, scarcely able to support herself, took a seat beside her on the sofa, and laboured hard at the work of consolation.

" Do not think it, do not fear it," she replied. " Sir Henry has too much sense, and Frank too much feeling, for anything of the kind. To-night both were unreasonably excited. The first blush of mutual irritation was too much for them. They will sleep upon it,—they will recover their reason,—they will have thought better of it before to-morrow."

" My dear, you don't know Harry," cried Lady Mary. " My son is not, like Frank, a shifting sandbank, on which no impression is lasting. An offence sinks deep into Harry's mind. To-morrow he will be fifty times more virulent against his cousin than ever."

" I should be sorry to think so ill of him," said Bessy gravely. " I think I do know Sir Henry, and it will much surprise me if to-

morrow he do not regret what has occurred, even more than my brother."

"Why, you surely do not think that Harry was in the wrong?" exclaimed her ladyship.

"I cannot pretend to judge between them. To form a just conclusion, it would be necessary to know exactly what previous understanding subsisted between the parties."

"Why, just this; that Harry always intended, some time or other, to propose to Miss Loveden, and that Frank cannot but have been aware of it."

"In that case, he had better have apprised my cousin previous to making his overtures. But I have reason to believe he was aware of nothing of the kind. Advances were made towards himself by the Raynhams. Was he to wait till it pleased Sir Henry Woodbridge to return to Hampshire, or give some intimation of where he was to be found, before he accepted the proffered civilities of the family?"

“ Ay, ay, I see how it is, Bessy ! you are entirely on *his* side of the question, and I suppose it's only natural. But, in my present strait, I want the advice of some disinterested friend,—I must have the opinion of a third person. I've a great mind to send off the carriage this very minute for Sir Robert Crewe. Sir Robert is such a friendly, obliging, neighbourly person, that I am convinced he would think nothing of coming over to Hursley to sleep”—

—“ Or of widening the breach between Frank and Sir Henry, in order to enhance his own merits as peacemaker.”

“ That is a very unhandsome notion of yours, my dear. But I must act in this instance on my own discretion, and shall certainly send for the General. I shall write him a little note before Harry comes in to tea, that he may be on the spot to-morrow morning, in case my fears should be realised, and an open rupture take place.”

“Pray, pray, be advised, my dear aunt,” cried Bessy, becoming really uneasy when she saw Lady Mary proceed towards her writing-desk. “Indeed my brother and cousin may be trusted ! Both have generous dispositions, both have excellent sense. If left to themselves, they will come round. But the idea of Sir Robert’s interference would only irritate them anew. There were fortunately no witnesses of their quarrel,—there should be none of their reconciliation. If you love your son, dearest Lady Mary, *do* not send for Sir Robert Crewe !”

“There ! just now you said I had nothing to fear for my poor dear Harry ! and now you plainly admit that you consider him in the utmost danger.”

“I admit nothing of the kind. The only danger I apprehend is from the intermeddling of Sir Robert, who is an object of antipathy to both of them, and has not a grain of regard for either.”

“ If you really thought that Harry would be vexed at his being sent for”—

“ Why spread the news of a family disagreement all over the county? We know, from daily experience, how dearly that tiresome old man delights to gossip over every one’s affairs. I am sure you do not wish the Beckfords, for instance, to hear that Sir Henry has met with a disappointment of the affections; and such would certainly be Sir Robert Crewe’s method of representing the affair!”

“ If you thought that”—

“ At all events, wait till to-morrow morning,” resumed Miss Grenfell. “ Nothing can occur between them without our having previous warning. Take care to be apprised should any messenger arrive here from Raynham Lodge; and, as a last resource, you can but obtain the interference of Sir Robert, or Mr. Danston.”

“ Mr. Danston! What should a poor peace-

able man like old Mr. Danston know about duels?"

"He knows something of human nature, which is equally to the purpose, and possesses at least as high a sense of honour as Sir Robert Crewe."

"Well, if you promise me that nothing can take place before morning, I think I may venture to suspend my measures. So ring the bell, my dear, and order tea."

Bessy Grenfell obeyed, and then asked permission to retire to her own room. She was much indisposed. It would be painful to her to meet her cousin in the existing state of affairs; and though Lady Mary remonstrated, insisting that she could neither make tea nor get through the evening without her niece's assistance, on raising her eyes towards Bessy's face, she noticed such deadly paleness, and such unequivocal symptoms of indisposition, that it was impossible to refuse.

“ Yes, go directly, and lie down !” cried Lady Mary. “ You seem to have got a dreadful headache, you seem to be shockingly ill ! I will tell Benton to send Smith to you with some camphor julep. Try to get a little sleep. If any further mischief should occur, rely upon it I will come and wake you up !”

CHAPTER II.

I had a friend that lov'd me !—
I was his soul—he liv'd not but in me :
We were so close within each other's breast,
The rivets were not found that joined us fast.
That doth not reach us yet !— We were so mix'd
As meeting streams ;— both to ourselves were lost,
We were one mass,— for he was I,— I, he !
Return, my better half, and give me all
Myself,— for thou art all !—
If I have any joy when thou art absent,
I grudge it to myself !— Methinks I rob
Thee of thy part.

DRYDEN.

THERE were several aching hearts that night
in the district which Sir Henry Woodbridge
of Hursley Park proposed to himself to represent
in parliament on the next dissolution, and
several sleepless pillows.

On Frank Grenfell's return to the Lodge, he did not think it necessary to avow the full extent of what had occurred between him and his cousin. Alone with Julia, he would have poured his whole secret into her bosom, as into that of his future wife; but the presence of the worldly-minded Lady Raynham restrained his confidence. He had no trust in the honesty of purpose of Lady Raynham. She was capable of taking unkind advantage of knowing that a rupture had occurred between him and the fountain-head of his prosperity, and that even his sister might, at no great distance of time, be cast homeless on the world. It was enough therefore at present to signify that the communication of his intended marriage had not been graciously received by Sir Henry Woodbridge.

Lady Raynham, having been firmly convinced that Woodbridge's objections to the match planned for him by his mother were final and conclusive, had no reason to sus-

pect that Frank's engagement was resented by the young Baronet in the character of a rival. She felt assured, on the contrary, that Sir Henry thought the match a bad one for his cousin; and that the smallness of Julia's fortune, and the loss of ministerial interest impending over the Raynham family, had been set forth in glowing colours to Mr. Grenfell at Hursley Park. His haggard looks, and evident distress of mind, confirmed her suspicions. She saw he had not told her all, and conceived that the portion which he reserved must be ungracious towards Miss Loveden or her family.

Instead, therefore, of assuming the unfriendly tone apprehended by poor Frank, she affected to treat the opinion of the Woodbridges with the utmost contempt. What signified to Grenfell their disapproval or opposition? He was of age,—independent,—superior to Lady Mary and her son in talents and judgment. She owned she thought too well of him, to fear

that he would be in the slightest degree biassed by their conduct.

Julia, deeper in her lover's secrets, looked grave and said nothing. But even she had not the remotest suspicion of the full extent of the mischief; and, after comforting Frank throughout the evening by the kindest words and most cheering exhortations, took leave of him for the night, with very little idea that the letter to which he was about to devote the hours of rest was to be the death-warrant of their mutual hopes and happiness.

And now Frank was at length alone with his cares; his heart bursting, his soul torn by a thousand conflicting emotions! He had been insulted; had been tacitly dismissed his cousin's house; had been treated as a menial,—a poor spiritless slave. His eyes seemed to burn in the sockets, as he sat down to throw upon paper the indignant thoughts suggested by such an outrage. To be upbraided in presence of his sister,—of the servants,—by

Woodbridge,—his friend,—his brother,—towards whom he had cherished such uniform,—such grateful,—such delicate regard. Next to Bessy and his plighted wife, in his inmost affections stood his cousin; the cousin who had spurned him,—the cousin who, after loading him with benefits, had converted every act of kindness into a curse.

Out of the abundance of his heart was all this rapidly and eloquently expressed in writing, and followed by a few farewell words of solemn nature, declining all future intercourse, and rejecting all further claim of kinship.

“After the monstrous accusations in which you have indulged against me,” were the concluding words of the letter, “it will not surprise me to find you assert that, at the first brightening of my prospects, I threw off my early friends; that, patronized by the Prince and adopted by my father’s family, I hastened to renounce for myself and my sister those

near connections of my poor mother who had stood our friends in the hour of adversity. Undeceive yourself!—my fortunes are precarious as ever. In blind and brotherly reliance on your affection, I have not hesitated to trifle wantonly with those professional duties which could alone secure my independence; I did not blush to receive alms out of your abundance. The bitterness of spirit which at this moment almost unmans me, reminds me with what genial and unsuspecting love I took from your hand, as I would have done from that of a father,—that of a brother,—that of Providence itself! That such benefits could ever rise up in judgment against me, my inexperience did not surmise. I put on these heavy chains of bondage as heedlessly as if they had been of flowers.

“Ruin is the result! my patrimony is diminished, my strength of mind and body enervated, and my heart seared by a deep and withering badge of humiliation. These are the treasures that remain to me in memory of the happy

days when I felt towards you as a brother, and fancied that as such I was loved and cherished in return. My prospects are hazardous as ever, my responsibility far more heavy ; yet, as I live and breathe, I would rather be the unportioned thing I am, with the consciousness of never having committed an ungenerous action, than the owner of Hursley, with the knowledge of having trampled upon a man bound to me alike by kindred blood and the humbleness of obligation. I swear to you, Henry, that, let me fall into what depths of poverty I may, I will rather accept charity from strangers, than bread from the hand of my mother's brother's son !"

Having thus in part relieved his mind of its weight of indignation, Grenfell threw himself upon his bed till morning. Tears dropped unrestrainedly upon his pillow. All was over for him. He was reduced to his original penury. He had placed himself in a situation rendering all further pretension to the hand

of Lord Raynham's niece preposterous and absurd. Instead of aspiring to the maintenance of a wife, he was scarcely in possession of means to maintain himself. On the morrow he must explain all! Julia, he knew, would approve him. Julia would feel that, after the scene of the preceding night, the acceptance of the smallest favour from the Woodbridges were an act of baseness. But the Raynhams might justifiably upbraid him with the slenderness of fortune on which he had, in the first instance, pretended to their niece's hand, and aggravate his still smarting wounds with merited reproach.

Nevertheless it must be borne. All that they chose to do or say, he must meet unresenting. His sole comfort was the certainty of being nobly and affectionately supported by his sister and dealt with by Julia; and even this brought with it a corresponding sorrow, the pang of resigning one so trustworthy and so full of love.

His first measure at day-break was to despatch his letter to Hursley Park, little suspecting that Lady Mary had already taken precautions that no message from him should reach his cousin till she had a reinforcement of aid and advice at hand to modify the consequences. Sir Robert Crewe, accordingly, was installed in the breakfast-room before Frank Grenfell's missive was allowed to be carried into Sir Henry's room; and it might have afforded an amusing study for any lover of the humorous to note the long inquisitive face of the General, and the fidgety fussiness of Lady Mary, as they sat together over their hot rolls, awaiting the flaming forth of the volcano. For full an hour did they remain on the alert, with distended eyes and listening ears, to catch the smallest indication of Sir Henry's movements. The valet was summoned and questioned concerning the delivery of the letter; and on learning that her son had hastily dismissed

him, desiring to be left alone, and drawing the bolts of his chamber ere he proceeded to the perusal, Lady Mary began to wring her hands, in the firm persuasion that he was priming and loading his Wogdons, and preparing for the field. Vainly did Sir Robert attempt to appease her vociferous agonies.

“ Upon my soul and honour ! my dear madam, you are mistaken,” cried he. “ My friend the young Baronet’s first impulse would be to refer himself to the advice of a friend.”

“ Ah ! my dear Sir Robert ! Harry’s only friend in this neighbourhood was this cold-hearted, ungrateful young man !”

“ By heavens ! your ladyship totally misapprehends me. By *friend* I mean a man of the world, a man of honour, a man of a certain age, a man, in short, such as myself, in whose hands he can safely leave the guidance of the transaction.”

“ I don’t believe he will leave the guidance

of it in anybody's hands ! Harry, poor dear fellow, is as obstinate as a mule ! There will be no third person even consulted."

" Then, by George ! ma'am, the business will be brought in 'wilful murder,' that's all ! Firing across a table or a handkerchief is visited now-a-days with the severest penalties of the law ; *vide* the case of Byron and Chaworth, of"—

" Good Lord ! what will become of us all !" interrupted Lady Mary in a fresh panic. " The family is disgraced for ever !"

" I'll tell you what, my dear ma'am. As soon as breakfast is over—(I'll trouble you for a little more of that potted venison,)—I would, in your place, and in the first place, demand an interview of my son ; mention to him that your friend, Sir Robert Crewe, is below ; and then, by George ! if he have any perplexity on his mind, he will naturally profit by the opportunity."

" But that would be expressly providing

him with a second!" screamed out Lady Mary.

"Well, ma'am; if, as you say, a challenge has really passed between the young folks, upon my soul and honour! I don't see what better you can do. Whether the business ends amicably or hostilely, seconds must be called in."

"I can bear this agony of suspense no longer!" cried her ladyship, flinging away her breakfast-napkin distractedly, after having swallowed two large cups of chocolate, and muffins *ad libitum*. And, while she was ringing the bell, Sir Robert dexterously helped himself to another slice of tongue.

"Benton, go up instantly to Sir Henry, and tell him I must see him! Tell him that, if he has done dressing, I am coming to visit him."

Benton tiptoed away, in deference to her ladyship's tragical countenance, and speedily returned. "He had seen Sir Henry's own

man, who couldn't take in no message, Sir Henry being very particularly engaged."

"Yes, — I know, I know! But he must have read his letter by this time, Benton; he must be disengaged by this time."

"Smith says, my lady, that they are engaged in earnest conversation; and that it would be as much as his place is worth to go in, after being particularly ordered to keep away."

"I told you so, Sir Robert," ejaculated the distressed mother, sinking into a chair, and turning as pale as the two cups of hot chocolate she had just imbibed would admit. "He has got a second with him already! One of the young Danstons, I make no doubt!—a hot-headed blockhead, who will delight in urging him on to mischief. Oh! Sir Robert! go to them,—fly to them,—preserve my unfortunate son!"

"Upon my soul and honour! my dear ma'am, if a friend is already in charge of the

affair, I hardly know what to say," replied the General, wiping his mouth.

"Say that you were the friend of his father,—the friend of both his grandfathers," sobbed Lady Mary; "and tell him that it will be the death of me at once, if he goes out with his cousin."

"I don't believe, my lady, that they are thinking of going out," interrupted the spruce Mr. Benton, without surmising the grounds of her ladyship's alarm.

"Why not, Benton?"

"Because Miss Grenfell has no bonnet on, my lady."

"Miss Grenfell?"

"Smith happened to mention that he had been sent by Sir Henry with a note"—

"A note!" cried the breathless Lady Mary."

—"To beg Miss Grenfell would give him a few minutes' conversation in the summer drawing-room. So, of course, I immediately pur-

ceeded there, my lady, with one of the men and a pan of coals, to see a fire blowed up. The room havn't been inhabited for some weeks past"—

"Well, well?"

"I happened to be still there, my lady, when Sir Henry walked in, to keep his appointment"—

"Well?"

"And he desired me to leave the room, my lady."

"Well, Benton?"

"Why, my lady, as I thought I saw something particlar a-going on, I loitered about the stairs till Miss Grenfell went in."

"Well, well?" cried Lady Mary, still more and more impatient.

"She had on her morning-dress, my lady; and, from all I could overhear, they sat down together near the window for a bit of chat; and, by Sir Henry's own orders, nobody's to go in to interrupt them. That's all, my lady."

Sir Robert Crewe endeavoured to keep his countenance at this simple elucidation of an affair which had been represented by Lady Mary under so lugubrious an aspect. Sir Henry Woodbridge, then, it seemed, made appointments before breakfast with his handsome cousin in one of the uninhabited chambers! Upon his soul and honour, a very satisfactory arrangement! What would the Beckfords say when they heard it? they who were always vaunting Miss Grenfell's modest propriety of conduct! What would Lady Raynham say,—the lady of “snow-broth” blood, who would fain have had ladies and gentlemen abide together in the domestic *disunion* of a Moravian union? What would the punctilious Mrs. Danston say? What would all the world say? for to all the world he was determined to recount the incident before he slept! His only mortification arose from the refutation thus brought to his former charge, that Sir Henry Woodbridge was driven away from

Hursley Park by his detestation of his cousin !

Meanwhile her ladyship, having dismissed Benton and cogitated over his communication, was of opinion that, since the business had been referred to Bessy's intermediation, all would be speedily and amicably adjusted. Aware of Miss Grenfell's passionate attachment to her brother, she knew that neither argument nor entreaty would be spared on her part to secure a reconciliation ; and, as her ladyship's alarms subsided, her reason returned.

Recalling to mind Bessy Grenfell's assurances that the interference of Sir Robert Crewe would be fatal to all hope of reconciliation, she set about hinting to the General, that, since things appeared to be approaching an auspicious termination, " perhaps it might be as well if, under such circumstances, none were present but members of the family ;" and as he had now laid in abundant store of breakfast

and mischief, and was on thorns to go and circulate reports of what was passing in every house of which he had the *entrée*, it was not difficult to persuade him that he had better hasten his departure.

“ By George ! my dear madam, I believe you are right,” cried he, ringing for his pony ; “ as matters seem to be veering round, people seldom like to swallow their words in presence of witnesses. Upon my soul and honour ! I believe I am as well out of the way.”

While all this “ infinite deal of nothing” was proceeding in the breakfast-room, poor Bessy had been startled out of the uneasy sleep into which she had fallen at the close of a still more uneasy night, by a few lines from her cousin, imploring an interview.

“ I wish to meet you alone, my dear Bessy,” wrote Sir Henry ; “ therefore come to me, I entreat, as soon as possible, in the summer drawing-room.”

As if intuitively aware that Smith, her cou-

sin's own man, the bearer of the despatch, had thought it part of his valetorial duty to make himself master of the contents, Miss Grenfell replied verbally, that "she would be with Sir Henry Woodbridge in half an hour." But though she instantly attempted to rise and dress herself, emotion rendered her for many minutes incapable of exertion. It was plain that, in her cousin's mind, some great revolution had taken place. Compunctious visitings, of some kind or other, had tamed down his exasperation against Frank. Even towards herself his tone was totally changed. He was not in the habit of addressing her as "Bessy;" he was not in the habit of "entreating" her to oblige him. His manner was invariably cold and measured, when not absolutely ungracious.

Perhaps he was becoming aware of having acted inconsiderately and harshly, and wished to make her the mediator between himself and Frank. Alas! It was far more likely that, previous to the final rupture and its disclosure

to the world, he desired to put her in possession of the exact state of the case, in order to his own vindication.

In this disheartening expectation, she proceeded to dress, wishing only that, if a separation were to take place between the families, he had written less kindly, less affectionately; for she felt that, although it might be a matter of rejoicing to Sir Henry Woodbridge to see *her* depart for ever from Hursley Park, to her it would be like parting from a brother to bid him an eternal farewell. She wished, in short, that he had not addressed her as "Bessy" at a moment when it was indispensable to maintain her utmost courage and composure; for, sooth to say, however superior to the nervous tremours of fine-ladyism, Miss Grenfell's hands did tremble so violently that she was scarcely able to complete her toilet in time to comply with the request of her cousin.

At the door of the summer drawing-room her agitation recurred more strongly than

before. It was an apartment never frequented by the family at that season of the year. She knew that, if Sir Henry were already there, he was there alone. Perhaps he might accost her with harshness; perhaps burst forth into vituperation of her brother. Against ill-usage the spirit of Miss Grenfell always rose disdainful. But no! There was no fear of harshness now. Had he intended to be unkind, he would not have used the word "entreat;" he would not have addressed her as "Bessy."

She entered the room so gently that Sir Henry, though already waiting for her, was unaware of her approach. Instead of occupying his usual station on the hearth-rug with his back towards the fire, he had thrown himself upon the sofa, where he lay concealing his face upon the cushion in such manifest emotion, that Miss Grenfell was on the point of retreating without disturbing him. On reflection, she felt this soft-heartedness to be favourable towards her brother; and having drawn towards

him, so as to announce that she was waiting his pleasure, Sir Henry started up. His eyes were swollen with weeping; and his cousin's first impulse was to hasten forward and take his hand. She thought better of it only on remembering the humiliating position in which she stood towards him !

But, with all these intimations of having been profoundly affected, Sir Henry's explanations, after having placed Miss Grenfell in a seat by his side, were manly and collected. He described in strong colours the letter he had received from Frank; and, in words devoid of bitterness, the want of candour with which his cousin had dealt with him in pursuing a clandestine courtship of Miss Loveden without previous warning to himself.

“ My brother might, perhaps, retort the charge,” mildly interposed Bessy. “ You were equally disingenuous with both him and me. Numberless are the times I have heard you avouch the utmost indifference towards Julia.”

“ On such points few men are explicit. But enough had passed between us on the subject to warrant my resenting that for months he should have striven to advise me into marriage with one, towards whom he was bound by a pre-existing attachment—perhaps by pre-existing engagements.”

“ Pardon me,” again interrupted Bessy. “ Till my own rashness in owning before you my friend Julia’s preference of Frank, and your indiscretion in repeating it to himself, no sort of understanding existed between them. It was not till a very short time before leaving town last spring, that Frank, rather inadvertently than designedly, confessed his attachment, and was dismissed Lord Raynham’s house.”

“ You are sure of that ?” demanded Sir Henry anxiously.

“ Perfectly so, though even I was unhonoured by their confidence. Their recent engagement, which was brought on by the caprice of the Raynhams, is only of two days’ existence.

There was no time to apprise you. Not a person at Hursley knew where you were to be found. All that you conceive to have been wilful concealment was accidental, and involuntary on the part of Frank."

"Then I am even more to blame than I imagined," cried Sir Henry. "Yet ever since my perusal of your brother's letter, Bessy, my self-accusations have been sufficiently heavy."

"I was sure my poor brother would take your unfriendliness bitterly to heart," replied Bessy with a deep sigh; "his situation towards you, cousin, is one of such unexampled delicacy!"

"The greater my fault, the greater the necessity for dealing with caution and delicacy," cried Woodbridge. "Yet I suffered my exasperation to overpower every better feeling! That blockhead, old Crewe, had stirred me up to frenzy! My mother, unintentionally, excited me to still further violence by describing the mutual attachment of Julia and your bro-

ther. I fancied myself a dupe ! I doubted not that they were amusing themselves and others at my expense,—that I was made a jest of by one whom I love as a brother.”

Again the tears started into Sir Henry’s eyes.

“ My dear Bessy,” said he, extending towards his cousin a hand which she now no longer hesitated to accept ; “ be generous, and aid me in the adjustment of this miserable business. Do what you can to repair the injury I have committed ! Persuade Frank Grenfell to obliterate from his mind all trace of what occurred last night.”

“ Did it regard any other than a pecuniary matter,” replied Miss Grenfell, involuntarily withdrawing her hand, “ all might be easily forgotten. But money obligations are such bitter, such gnawing, such grinding, degrading facts, that to fancy them made the pretext of an insult is indeed the poisoning of a simple arrow. From any one else Frank would have borne it better. I never knew him vindictive.

I never saw him bear hatred or malice in his heart. But on this occasion, and if he have addressed you in the tone you describe, I almost despair."

"You really think there is no hope of reconciliation?" faltered Woodbridge.

"Every hope of reconciliation. I am sure it would be as impossible for Frank to withhold his hand on seeing yours extended, as it would be for me; but it would be equally impossible to receive further favours from one who has once taxed him with ingratitude! Things can never be between you on their former footing. On one side there will be embarrassment, on the other mistrust!"

Sir Henry shrugged his shoulders with a gesture of despair, then began to pace the room with hurried footsteps.

"Of what avail, then, a peace-making!" he exclaimed, pausing, at length, opposite to his cousin. "It is only to avert the ruin of one most dear to me that I would fain stoop to concessions.

I know Frank, and I know the worthlessness of the reed on which he is just now leaning. He cannot work, — it is not in his nature. His temper and temperament are altogether aristocratic. Perseverance is a virtue out of Grenfell's sphere. He will do nothing in the law; and when the Raynhams find to what a position he has reduced himself"—

—"They will throw him off, as others have done before them! I do not doubt it! But what will be the worst result? The interruption of his marriage with Julia Loveden,—no serious evil in the estimation of those to whom his interests are dear."

"Bessy! must I have to reproach ~~even you~~ with double-dealing?" cried Sir Henry. "~~How~~ often have you argued with me in Miss Loveden's favour?"

"And would again, had she happened to distinguish you with her preference. The best wife for Sir Henry Woodbridge is the worst for my brother."

“ But even supposing that he reconciled himself to the relinquishment of his plans, what is to become of him in case the Tory party remain in power, according to the expectation of many ? His expensive habits, his debts, were nothing so long as he loved me and regarded my purse as his own. But now that he has broken off the connection”—

“ The first movement did not come from Frank.”

“ You are ungenerous to remind me of it, when you see my rash offence so sincerely repented. But, at all events, the mischief is irreparable without your intervention. My dearest cousin, you have little idea how utterly my happiness is concerned in the adjustment of this quarrel. You have little idea how dear to me are both Frank and yourself. I am a dull, awkward, lazy fellow, Bessy, little in the habit of giving expression to my feelings; but you see that I am sincere now. Till Frank came first to Hursley, I was a poor

inert, mother-spoiled whelp, full of selfishness and self-conceit. What I am,—such as it is,—I owe to Frank. With all the better qualities of my nature he has inspired me. The desire to live and let live, the wish to benefit my fellow-creatures, I have learnt from him ! What a lesson, in return for a few paltry hundreds of pounds, to me nothing, though to him vital to both comfort and honour ! Bessy, place all this before your brother in a clear point of view, and renew a right footing between us.”

Miss Grenfell replied by silent tears.

“ Admit, at least, that it was Frank who first receded from the brotherly intimacy between us ?” resumed Woodbridge, interpreting her silence to his disadvantage. “ The moment I arrived in town last year, I felt that I had lost him ! I struggled, and, thank God ! successfully, against any mean jealousy on finding him, in spite of the worldly advantages on my side, more courted in society than myself. I did him justice. I saw that he did not

plume himself on the popularity which, unsought, he had attained. But I regretted the loss of my companion, the only companion unfeignedly and universally welcome to my heart ! It was in the common course of things that we could no longer be inseparable as in our boyhood. But, when I submitted to lose sight of him as a companion, I did not anticipate the possibility of losing him as a friend !”

“ In London, you appeared to be surrounded by the same set of acquaintance as Frank.”

“ Yes ! men that he threw off as lightly as he threw off myself. I amused myself with them ; but they were not Frank ! I swear to you, Bessy, that from the moment he ceased to be my companion, I have had no real enjoyment of life. I have been fretful, restless, unhappy ! Judge, therefore, what it will be when, instead of supposing him indifferent to me, I know him to be vindictive and resentful ! my enemy,—Frank Grenfell my enemy,—and an enemy of my own making !”

“ If you would permit me to go and confer with my brother,” said Bessy, mildly ; “ if you would allow me to repeat to him a quarter of what you have said to me”—

“ All, if you will ! My pride requires no reservations.”

—“ I am convinced that everything may yet be cleared up. When two people, honest in their intentions, meet together with the desire to be friends, it is impossible for animosity to hold out. If Lady Mary would do me the favour of lending me the carriage to drive over to Raynham Lodge”—

“ Anything and everything the place contains is at your service,” cried Sir Henry, ringing the bell with impetuosity, and blushing at the idea that his cousin’s unusually deprecating mode of speech might arise from her mortifications of the preceding night.

But the movement was an unlucky one. Lady Mary, who had long been on the listen for an incident, started up on hearing the bell

rung, and rushed into the room in pretended anxiety lest the scene between her poor dear Harry and his cousin should have ended in an altercation similar to that between her son and Frank. Sir Henry's emotion vanished at once on the appearance of his mother, who came with her usual pompous trivialities, her silly explanations, and vulgar terrors, to object to the purposed visit ; or rather, to insist upon accompanying Bessy as bearer of an olive-branch to Raynham Lodge.

CHAPTER III.

We heartily solicit
Your gracious self to take on you the charge
And kingly government of this your land :
Not as protector, steward, substitute,
Or lowly factor for another's gain ;
But as successively from blood to blood,
Your right of birth, your empire, your own.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHETHER her ladyship stayed or went was equally unimportant ; for Frank Grenfell was already many miles on his road towards London ! Ere half recovered from the agitation into which he had been thrown by enditing and despatching his letter to Hursley Park, the daily post brought communications from

London of the highest importance; letters from the noble peer to his lady, desiring her to lavish all her courtesies upon her guest, and on no account let him stir from the Lodge till his lordship's return; and letters from Carlton House to Frank, requesting his immediate presence in London.

It was vexatious to be compelled to leave Raynham without a full explanation with Miss Loveden. He wished to place her in possession not only of what had occurred between himself and Sir Henry, but of the nature of his retaliation. To see her alone, however, was impossible. Lady Raynham, in the renewed exuberance of her hospitalities, did not for a moment quit his side; nay, on learning that his sudden journey to town was occasioned by a command from the Prince, her politeness grew so overpowering, that Grenfell feared he should be compelled to part from his affianced wife, perhaps for ever, without one of those tokens of affection which dwell on the me-

mories of lovers like glimpses of a happier sphere.

When he was gone, Julia Loveden sat down and wept ; and Lady Raynham, aware that it is the approved custom of engaged young ladies to dissolve into tears on the departure of their " soul's idol," discreetly left her to the enjoyment of her gentle griefs.

But while all this commotion was excited in Hampshire by his departure, Frank Grenfell on his way towards London felt his spirits gradually revive, and his cares diminish,—though pretty nearly able to thank the gods, with Jaffier, that he was not worth a ducat.

Hope, the charmer, lingered still behind.

To be the pensioner of the country by becoming the faithful servant of the country, was a far more acceptable mode of dependence than to be a hanger-on upon haughty relations. If the Prince considered him worthy to be placed in parliament as one of the organs of his party, it was because that party already regarded him

with esteem and expectation ; it was because his debating-society renown had reached from Oxford to the metropolis ; it was because his talents had been highly predicted of by those college dignitaries who to himself had found it necessary to notice only his idleness and his excesses.

Already the laurel-branch seemed to hover before his eyes, an offering brought by his dove of peace and promise as a sign that the waters of strife were receding. How glorious if, instead of having to accost the Raynhams with humiliating confessions, he were able to tell them that he had a royal pledge of patronage, and that he should be able to place their Julia, *his* Julia, in a safe and honourable condition of life !

Arrived in town, these hopes brightened almost into certainty.

The Regency Bill was considered safe ; the restrictions were in their turn to be restricted within the smallest possible limit of time and

authority. The men of Frank's habitual society saluted him on all sides with cries of exultation. On making his appearance at Carlton House, he found indeed his services in request for a matter of mere private courtesy. A travelling carriage, on a peculiar construction, was required as a present to a foreigner of distinction; and Frank, who was "curious" in carriage-building, and had boasted at the royal table of a design he had made for a *dormeuse* for Sir Henry Woodbridge, which proved too expensive for execution, was entreated to give his advice and assistance in the momentous affair.

Still, Grenfell was neither disappointed nor offended. He knew that others of far higher rank and pretensions employed themselves cheerfully in similar errands, and was moreover persuaded that the ostensible commission was but a screen for higher purposes; that he was wanted on the spot; that the Prince wished him to be at hand.

Vast surmises, meanwhile, were grounded upon the extent of his favour. A Prince's favourite is regarded as a vane placed in a prominent spot, to intimate to the world the shiftings of the wind. Frank found that hundreds were watching his countenance for indications of the progress of the Regency Bill; and hundreds more, for hints of what was likely to come to pass when the question should be carried. "What sort of a fellow is Grenfell?" was becoming a common inquiry at the clubs.

"Is young Grenfell Whig or Tory?" demanded the pig-tails of Boodle's, who affect unlimited ignorance of the rising generation.

"Is Grenfell a son of the present Lord Waterton?" inquired certain of the Pharisees, whose stiffneckedness professes to worship Virtue as a privilege of peerage.

"Is he a smart fellow? Is he known on the turf?" demanded on the other hand cer-

tain Sadducees, who attribute the same immunities to the elect of Newmarket.

“*Sapia ella la musica?*” was the query of the clique from which Sir William Beckford had snatched his “*Fanatiche per la musica*,” borrowing the phrase which Catalani’s talents at that moment rendered universal.

“Is he a marrying man?” cried the mothers of many daughters.

“Is he a man of gallantry?” sighed the husbands of giddy wives.

But to all these interrogations the world afforded only a single answer. “Frank Grenfell was the best fellow in the world.” It had forgotten to “note him in parcels.” It knew him not in detail.

The bright effulgence of royal favour dazzled its eyes whenever they attempted so impertinent a scrutiny. They saw him make his entrances and exits at Carlton House. On that stage, at least, he was a favourite performer; a sufficient guarantee for his popularity elsewhere.

But, however loud the applause of the spectators, Frank Grenfell had too much tact to be quite so easily satisfied. To be ko-tooted by a Lord Warkworth, and shaken hands with by a Lord Teviot, did not prove to *him* that he was a well-graced actor. *He* knew that he was merely one of "the Prince's poor players," encouraged to figure on the stage, but never admitted behind the scenes; not even introduced to the notice of the prompter and scene-shifters busy with the piece now in rehearsal.

"You appear satisfied," he observed to Sheridan one day, when dining together at their club, after being detained till nearly the dinner-hour at Carlton House. "But, unless you know more of what is going on than I do, your *châteaux en Espagne* are built on a very slight foundation!"

"In a political point of view, perhaps I know less; but I know my man, which piece of 'knowledge' is indeed 'power.' The Prince is a person of peculiar temper. The Prince

would sooner open his mind to a stranger than to the man whom he purposes to employ. He has his servants, and he has his friends. His servants fancy themselves his friends; his friends suppose themselves prized as faithful servants. Youth, and a romantic nature, once rendered me ambitious of the former distinction; but as I see the friends shifted without ceremony, trundled off *en masse* in a buck-basket to Datchet Mead, I no longer disguise from myself that I prefer the substance to the shadow of confidence. I like to be assured by the Red-book that I really belong to his Royal Highness."

"You conceive, then, that the semi-trust reposed in us is a happy omen?"

"Certainly. Young sovereigns throw themselves, heart and soul, into the arms of the party they intend to favour; but the Prince of Wales, remember, is schooled by thirty years' experience! The Prince is in the position of some ancient damsel, who, marrying late in

life, must play both the prude and the coquet, in order to enhance her favours and efface the memory of early indiscretions."

"Are you not considering the case too curiously, and attempting to 'hew blocks with a razor?'" cried Frank. "The two persons whom the Prince loves best and sees oftenest, are virulent Tories. Of these, the Duke of York is evidently as well satisfied as yourself with his Royal Highness's intentions. One of you must be deceived."

"Perhaps both, perhaps neither," replied Sheridan, paltering, like other oracles, in a double sense. "At all events, I grudge no satisfaction to the Duke of York, who is a most kindhearted man and honourable gentleman."

On another occasion, when Frank reported to his friend some speech savouring strongly of Toryism, which he had heard from the very lips of their royal patron—"Ay, ay!" was his reply, "the jargon of his calling! 'Skelton

Skeltonizeth !' The claws and fangs of the lion are appearing.

This new and gorgeous garment, majesty,
Sits not so easy on him as you think.

Toryism is the religion of the King of England, Whiggism only of the Prince of Wales ; and it is precisely because his Royal Highness is so much nearer to the throne than in '89, that Perceval and the rest no longer insist so strongly on its prerogative. The sentiment will come of itself. Neither party has judged it necessary to keep up the hypocrisies of public life. No right is asserted, and therefore none is denied."

" There may arise some difficulty, however, in evading the question in the speech from the throne !"

" From the throne? difficulty in evading *any* question in a speech from the throne? My dear boy, where are your eyes, ears, and sagacity? Old Thurlow used to swear he would drive a coach-and-six through the stiffest act of parliament. I would drive the car

of Jaggernaut through a King's speech, and leave no rent or rut behind. A King's speech is a generalization of generalities !”

“ Alack, poor parliament ! or rather, alack poor people, who put their trust in parliament, which puts its trust in the King !”

“ Better make the trust reciprocal, perhaps, and confide more in the people,” murmured his companion in a scarcely audible tone. “ But the day is not come for pure Whiggism to take root in place, and expand in the sunshine of power. This coalesced party, which all men naturally call the Opposition, and few men venture to call the Whigs, may perhaps hazard a furlong or two beyond their predecessors towards crossing the Hellespont, but they will take care not to swim a stroke beyond their depth. Religious freedom will gain little by their accession to power ; political freedom, not a jot. The age is not ripe for the adoption of liberal opinions. A quarter of a century hence, the bantling will have

outgrown its leading-strings, and be hungry for food meet for strong men."

"You speak of the Whigs as if amongst them, but not of them," observed Frank timidly, as if anxious to relieve himself of a doubt.

"I speak of them as perhaps the majority of the party might be tempted to speak of me," replied Sheridan. "Since Charles Fox's death, the dearest bond that bound all men of spirit to the cause is dissolved. Nay, even from that dear and valued friend I was personally alienated by my distaste for a coalition that lowered him in the eyes of the kingdom. The Duke of Portland and myself—But why enter into all these small particulars? I hold myself, and I hold you, my dear Grenfell, the personal friend of the Prince, and not as a political partisan. As friends, our opinions may have influence with him; but, as far as I am concerned, it will be an influence directed by individual conscience, and not by the whisper of a faction."

Grenfell was disappointed. His views pointed towards the wide sphere and honourable advancements of public life, rather than the paltry career of favouritism. Neither was he content to hear the word *faction* applied to a party of which such men as Grey and Grenville were the ostensible heads, and Lord Holland an active counsellor. Of an age to place implicit faith in the creed that intelligent women possess the surest insight into political character, from the same cause which renders them the most accurate judges of the merit of wine,—uncorrupted taste,—Frank Grenfell now recalled to mind that both his sister and Julia, and the worldly-minded Lady Mary Russell, united in predicting that the party assumed to be that of the Prince Regent elect would be sacrificed to personal motives and the desire of popularity; for, that the Liberal party was unpopular, even its partisans did not affect to deny. The influence of the Whigs in the country was limited; and their pretension of limiting the privileges

of the aristocracy circumscribed in return their influence in more courtly circles, whose enlightenment suggests the necessity and advantage of reform, so long as themselves are treated as within the veil of the sanctuary, unapproachable by hands profane. In parliament, indeed, the Whigs maintained as high a superiority as can be obtained by force of talent over strength of numbers. But there are two species of parliamentary success: the influence held by forcible speakers over their less gifted colleagues; and the influence held by the wordy, plausible, common-place political morality of these less gifted colleagues over the country at large. No party ever calculated more ably than the Tories of Perceval's school the extra-parliamentary influence of specious arguments inflated by diffuse and indefinite verbosity, and rendering the expedient the better reason.

To decypher that mighty hieroglyphic, a Prince's heart, was of course beyond the skill of Grenfell's unpractised eye. He knew that,

since the old friends of his royal patron were Whigs, his new friends Tories, one or other must be comparatively given up: that, in one case, the Regent would be reviled as ungrateful to former partisans; in the other, as about to aggravate the distemper of the parent he represented, by thrusting out his faithful servants. But it was as impossible to him to conjecture whether "Hertford House were to settle the question," or Holland House decide the dilemma, as to surmise what would be the next piece of domestic treachery perpetrated by Sir Robert Crewe.

As the wilderness engenders creeping things innumerable, as well as the mammoth and the hippopotamus, a thousand insignificant but mischievous rumours were created in London society by the vast wonder of the moment. It was said that Perceval had brought the future Regent to his feet, by threats and intimidation; that, as confidential law-adviser to the Princess of Wales, he had obtained possession of papers

fatal to the honour of the heir-apparent. But the political antagonists of the Minister were fortunately of too high and honourable a nature to stoop to the entertainment of such reports. The integrity of Mr. Perceval's mind was as fully appreciated as the mediocrity of his talents; they knew that it was not by an act of baseness such a man was capable of seeking the retention of office. On the contrary, it was predicted of him by many, and expected of him by some, that his pledges to the unhappy Princess, placed by her uncle and sovereign under his protection and that of Lord Chancellor Eldon, would ensure his resignation of office. It appeared out of the nature of even political things for the breeze of subserviency to shift so abruptly from north to south, as for the conscience-keepers of the Princess of Wales to become those of the Prince.

This latter view of the case gained authenticity in Grenfell's eyes from the course of conduct adopted towards him by Lord Raynham.

One of his first measures (in the intervals of his duties in Long Acre) had been to wait upon Miss Loveden's uncle, excuse his precipitate departure from the Lodge, and express deep contrition for having adventured proposals which the slightness of his means rendered it impossible for him to follow up. To his utter surprise, Lord Raynham manifested warm indignation,—not against his original offence, but his subsequent repentance. Lord Raynham chose to believe that it was the improvement, not the decline of his prospects in life, which motivated Grenfell's desertion; and when, encouraged by this singular view of the case, Frank entreated permission that the engagement might remain undissolved till the adjustment of public affairs should place his own in a more definite point of view, his lordship gladly acquiesced, evidently relieved on finding his suspicions groundless.

That Lord Raynham should make the anticipated changes a groundwork for family ar-

rangements, seemed to infer that he had positive knowledge of the approaching downfall of his party ; for Grenfell had no knowledge of the contempt in which such hangers-on are held by those who, having secured their vote, have nothing further to gain or lose by them. Mr. Perceval would as soon have confided his plans and expectations to one of his coach-horses, as to Lord Raynham. Even the less responsible heads of the party kept him at a distance, having learned from Lord Teviot of certain symptoms of backsliding, which, in order to conceal his own baffled designs, his lordship took the initiative in pointing out to notice.

But even the comfort derived by Frank from the suspension of evil caused by Lord Raynham's foresight, did not efface the rankling grief occasioned by the ill-usage of his cousin.

Bessy Grenfell, on proceeding to the Lodge, and learning her brother's departure, had wisely refrained from entering into superfluous explanations with Lady Raynham and her niece.

From the dispirited looks of Julia she discerned that Miss Loveden at least was partly apprised of what had occurred ; and, from the heartiness of her embrace, saw with equal certainty that as yet she knew not the worst.

“ Gone ! Already off for London ! ” was Sir Henry’s ejaculation on her return. “ Already, perhaps, about to plunge into some desperate measure.”

“ I trust not,—nay, I sincerely believe not,” was his cousin’s reply. “ Frank had letters, I find, this morning from London ; some from his political friends, one containing a command from the Prince. His absence may refer, therefore, wholly to the public business now in progress. I know that he entertained expectations of being, at some future time, returned to parliament. The personage who thus distinguishes him may, perhaps, stand in need of immediate service.”

“ God send it ! ” replied Sir Henry with a heavy sigh. “ Though the establishment of

Frank's independence would diminish all the grace of my advances, I would rather, a million times, see my friend placed in a situation of permanent prosperity, than enjoy the selfish gratification of knowing that I conduced to his comfort."

"My brother's preferment, by enabling him without forfeiture of his word or self-respect to forget all that has past, and accept without a drawback the renewed offer of your friendship, would be doubly valuable," observed Bessy. "For my own part, there is no sacrifice I would not make to see you both together as of old,—almost brothers, wholly friends! When I reflect how much each of you has conduced to the other's happiness, it is incomprehensible how any serious misunderstanding should have occurred between persons so attached."

"Human frailty!" replied Sir Henry with a faint smile. "On one side, wounded vanity; on the other, wounded pride. I could not bear to feel myself supplanted,—Frank to find his

better fortune resented. But I was in the wrong ! I do not want to recant my recantation. I was wholly and miserably in the wrong."

"But you will write to my brother?" inquired Bessy timidly.

"I would willingly write to him if I knew how; but there are so many delicate points to be touched upon, that only a woman's hand could do so without giving pain. Besides, he might return my letter unopened."

Unless some change had been wrought in his mood of the preceding night, Bessy felt that this was by no means improbable.

"I scarcely desire even you to write," resumed Sir Henry. "I wished you to plead, because your good sense and good feeling would have suggested to you to allow free course to his first outburst of anger; then recommence the plea with milder expostulation. But it is so easy to return a petulant answer to a letter, and so much time is lost in renewing the attempt."

“ Still, if neither of us write” — Bessy began.

“ I should much prefer a personal appeal. Supposing I were to send to Hartwell (who was, at all events, coming over to Hursley next week). Jack Hartwell is no Solon ; but he has just as much wisdom as is necessary to conduct a cause that requires neither art nor artifice, and an instinct of gentlemanly feeling that seldom fails to guide him right. What think you of making Hartwell our mediator ?”

“ You could not do better,” was Miss Grenfell’s reply. “ Frank has a sincere regard for him, and so much confidence in his partiality, that he will not be on his guard against him as your partisan. Pray write to him instantly. I feel confident that all will be happily arranged between you, if you place yourself and Frank in the hands of one so truly friendly to both as Mr. Hartwell.”

CHAPTER IV.

There's not, I think, a subject
That sits in heart-grief or uneasiness
Under the shade of your sweet government.
E'en those that were your father's enemies
Have steep'd their galls in honey, and do serve you
With hearts create of duty and of zeal.

SHAKESPEARE.

LONDON was now as full and active as during the season. There was a general stir and expectancy, as at the commencement of a new reign. In spite of the inclemency of the season, equipages were seen rolling in all directions; ladies of fashion gossiping and shopping, and members of parliament as plenty as blackberries.

Though flurried and harassed by the contending tides of interests upon which, or

against which, he was borne along, the feeling uppermost in Francis Grenfell's bosom was happiness,—the happiness of a young heart confident of the affections of a lovely and beloved being pledged to its tenderness for ever. Even the harsh taunts of Sir Henry Woodbridge faded in a memory which had so recently imbibed precious avowals of attachment from the lips of one of the brightest and most gifted women in the world. He was happy,—almost perfectly happy,—he was ashamed to own to himself how happy, when he reflected upon the precarious foundation of his joy.

Accident acquainted him that Lady Mary Russell was in town.

“Hillo! Grenfell, my boy!” cried Tom Hounslow, seizing him by the arm one morning as he was emerging from Hookham's. “What have you done with Woodbridge? He left the North in such a devil of a hurry that the Yorkshire belles were very near

putting his name in the 'Hue and Cry.' What had he stolen at Doncaster to put him into such a funk?—a heart or a horse?"

"Sir Henry Woodbridge is, I believe, at Hursley Park," replied Grenfell drily, trying to shake off his companion.

"Ay, true! He is not in parliament yet, not wanted at the shop, like my father and the rest of the upper servants—the House of Horribles, as my friend, or rather your friend, Lady Mary Russell calls them; or, by the way, Warkworth's friend. That stupid hound is such a fixture there just now, that I suspect he is cutting us all out."

"So often where? Is Russell in town?"

"Lady Mary is, so that it is to be supposed her worse half is not far off. I was with her last night. The House was up early, and Warkworth was so obliging as to bestow upon us all the tediousness which I suppose he had been imbibing in his place for the three preceding nights. Now, as I keep out of parlia-

ment expressly to avoid making the porches of my ears the instrument of my demise, like those of his Majesty King Hamlet, I have no idea of a fellow coming and ex-officially poisoning one to death with politics. However, Warkworth is in such prime favour, that Lady Mary won't hear a word against him."

"I never used to meet him there," replied Frank, somewhat comforted to find himself superseded in the arduous but gratuitous office of fine lady's pet.

"No; old Teviot was sometimes at the house, but Warkworth always affected to be the slave of the nation. However, they met at some stupid country-house or other in the autumn; and, since Lady Mary's return to town, she seems to have taken him up. Always in extremes! A year or two ago, she was wild after some cursed methodistical piece of clock-work of an extempore preacher. When I was in favour, she used to rattle down to Staines and back again, in Marytown's barouche, like

a wild woman. In your time she grew soft and sentimental ; and now, unless I'm much mistaken, she's setting up for a party woman, an *intriguante*, a Duchesse de Longueville, or something of that sort. Go there to-night—(no, not to-night—the House sits to-night,) but go there on Saturday, and you'll find her and half-a-dozen other numskulls, male and female, spinning their political cobwebs, and fancying them stout enough for mainsails of a man-of-war.”

“ We most of us spin our cobwebs, and fancy them mainsails ! I will try the strength of Lady Mary's some evening soon,” replied Frank ; and, on extricating himself from Tom Hounslow, he laughed more openly than he had permitted himself to do in presence of one of the emptiest coxcombs about town, at the idea of Lady Mary's new profession of faith.

Albeit as little of a puppy as could be expected of a handsome young man of fashion

and two-and-twenty, the notion involuntarily presented itself to his mind that Lady Mary, piqued at the publicity about to be given to his passion for another, had chosen to appear the first deserter, and found a correspondent sentiment in Lord Warkworth; who, satisfied by his second rejection, that he was an object of worse than indifference to Miss Grenfell, was eager to disguise from the world the fruitless tenacity of his suit. It was too much for Grenfell's gravity to conceive the solemn, tedious Warkworth toiling in vain as slave to the caprices of the fantastic Lady Mary! When he recollected all the strange behests he had been required to perform as a test of the purity and submissiveness of his regard, he could not but laugh outright at the idea of Peter Hartwell's pedantic prig, fetching and carrying sing-song up and down, by copying into manuscript the printed gentilities of William Spenser, extracting the piquances from

Little's poems, and the thorns from the roses
 X of Moore.

His utmost imaginations fell short, however, of the glaring absurdity of the scene. The perplexity of Lord Warkworth between his desire to forestall any rumour of the renewal of his addresses to Miss Grenfell, and his apprehensions lest his high moral character should suffer by his *liaison* with Lady Mary, was in itself a study. Though the prominence of her ladyship's part in fashionable life had caused the harmless nature of her sentimentalities to be so thoroughly understood, that there was nothing to have compromised a bishop in succeeding to the honour of her smiles; still, decency was the pass-word of the party in the midst of which Lord Teviot's son was born and nurtured. The sovereign and the sovereign's court were models of decorum; and Lord Warkworth, on recalling to mind the habits of the eminent Tory

My name is not in the list
May I be in the service

Ministers, whose mantle he trusted might be cast upon him in their upward flight, trembled lest it might be inferred that his devotion to the fair wife of Mr. Russell,—the invisible (old) boy,—was of a nature less Platonic than united the Paladins of old to those liege ladies for whom, without fee or reward, they broke their hearts and lances.

On re-entering the meretricious coterie of which poor Bessy had entertained such apprehensions, Frank Grenfell could scarcely explain to himself by what magic he had ever become spell-bound in such a circle! Released from the wizardries of boyhood, he now beheld the naked realities of the spot;—the palace was become a cottage, the goddess a decrepit old woman, the lessons of philosophy a manual of trickery and meanness. He despised all he saw, and himself still more, for having been enslaved by such shallow pretences.

Lady Mary, meanwhile, was careful to make him sensible, from the moment of his en-

trance, that his kingdom was taken from him. "Warkworth" was languidly called upon to pick up the pocket-handkerchief, to light the pastille, to open the album, to shut the door ; and though his lordship's efforts at gallantry resembled the easy elegance of Grenfell much as the frisky donkey, leaping on his master's knee in the fable, resembled the antics of his predecessor the lap-dog, Lady Mary saw no fault in his lumbering assiduities.

Without suspecting how recently her new knight had been seen by Grenfell in the character of a contemned and humble wooer to another, she detained him by her side to become auditor of all the pungent allusions to unfortunate courtship and disastrous matrimony with which she chose to punish the faithless Frank. Lord Warkworth had the satisfaction to hear her avow her contempt of the baseness of a temper which could stoop to renew addresses where they had once proved unacceptable ; and when Frank, in good-

natured compassion to his mortification, attempted to put an end to her pleasantries; Lady Mary, convinced that her raillery was too biting to be borne by the conscious criminal, wore her jests threadbare by repetition. The rising Earl of Chatham had the satisfaction to hear himself called (by implication) fool, dupe, and blockhead; while her ladyship fancied she was sacrificing hecatombs to his vanity in the person of his rival.

Had Lady Mary conjectured even a fourth part of the truth, she would have been exceedingly vexed, not at having given pain to a friend, but at having committed a blunder so indicative of want of tact. But though free from even a grain of personal preference for Lord Warkworth,—as her liking for any of those whom the world mistakenly supposed her lovers consisted in a discursive selfishness,—it was as easy to fancy herself into enthusiasm for him as for Tom Hounslow. There was even more excitement for her luxurious idleness in becoming

the Aspasia of the new Pericles—an Egeria to the modern Numa, than in wearing down the faculties of such a mind as Frank Grenfell's, which, by a sort of retributive justice, had given her as much superfluous trouble as the breaking up of basaltic columns gives to the road-menders. She affected to have undertaken Lord Warkworth's political education; and her pupil affected to talk of her as "an accomplished friend whose advice had been bespoken for him by his father."

"Lord Teviot had such a high opinion of Lady Mary's intellectual faculties! Lord Teviot had pointed out his charming friend as the very Mentor for a young man adventuring among the rocks and shoals of public life!" and the simpering inanity of countenance which accompanied these announcements, justified the sobriquet bestowed upon his lordship by one of the sprightliest belles of Carlton House — *Le Veau à la mode*, in contradistinction to another member of his party, who

figured in the caricature shops under the title of "*Le Bœuf à la mode*."

Random shots are, however, occasionally successful; and the advice bestowed by Lord Warkworth's Egeria upon her Numa was as good as the best. Without conjecturing his shabby intentions towards his party, Lady Mary (out of mere spleen towards Grenfell, whom she regarded as attached to the coalesced Whigs,) never ceased from asserting that there was not the smallest chance of the dismissal of Perceval and his colleagues. "She knew for a fact that all was already settled. She had it from the best authority, that those who held the leading-strings of the Prince had so decided it. It was all very well for Sheridan to rely upon his influence as a favourite, or for Lord Grey or Lord Grenville to feel that they had claims upon the confidence of the new Regent. The Prince knew too much of the world to fix his abode in a house divided against itself; the Prince was too fond of his

household, who must almost without an exception resign in case of the establishment of the Whigs; the Prince was as much in awe of Lord Grey as a child of its schoolmaster; the Prince preferred the services of those who were easier to deal with; the Prince dared not hazard, at such a juncture, the introduction to power of the obstinate advocates of the Catholic claims. In short,—and a female ‘in short’ includes everything and nothing,—she knew that all was settled, she knew that the Tories were to remain.”

Inwardly blessing his stars that Miss Grenfell had proved cruel, and that he had committed himself by no overt demonstration, Lord Warkworth already renounced his intention of “seeing things in a new light.” Unskilled in the phraseology of such fantastic dames as Lady Mary, he dreamed not the real amount of her ladyship’s “knowledge.” In point of fact, she “knew” only that she wished to assert something unsatisfactory to Grenfell; and, had

he possessed estates in the West Indies, would have been just as ready to announce that, "in short, she knew there was going to be a tremendous hurricane."

Nevertheless, the false light thus in wantonness thrown out was the means of saving from the breakers a vessel to whose destinies she was in truth indifferent. Lady Mary's "in short" proved an ægis of safety to Lord Warkworth; while to Grenfell, whom experience had instructed in the value of her "pribbles and prabbles," her denunciations afforded neither pain nor uneasiness.

CHAPTER V.

Then, since Fortune's favours fade,
You, that in her arms do sleep,
Learn to swim, and not to wade,
For the hearts of Kings are deep.

LORD BACON.

Four days after his arrival in town, and while still engrossed by the consideration of patent axles and patterns of lace and linings for the most perfect of travelling carriages, Grenfell was startled by receiving from his royal patron the offer of a small appointment in the household.

A year before,—six months—three—one,—his utmost desires would have been accomplished in this unanticipated act of gracious-

ness. But though he felt its incompatibility with his present views, as necessitating his residence at Carlton House upon a stipend that would afford him little more than pocket-money, he felt acceptance to be an act of duty, and tried to force back his ambitions into his soul, as the magician in the eastern tale attempted to re-imprison the enfranchised genie.

To act without consulting the able friend from whom even royalty was glad to take counsel, was out of the question. Sheridan, so rash and unlucky in the administration of his own affairs, seldom proved otherwise than an admirable adviser in those of other people.

But though the cleverest of modern political adventurers had in the first instance brought forward Frank Grenfell as an instrument, regardless of his interests or welfare, this heartless indifference had long given place to nobler sentiments. It was impossible to live in intimacy with so confiding and generous a spirit

as Grenfell's without admiring his talents and being captivated by his warmth of heart. Such a man was not to be sacrificed. Such a man possessed an intrinsic value beyond the paltry appraisement of pursuivants-at-arms or party leaders. Frank Grenfell had a noble soul, and merited noble entreatment. Even to serve his own purposes, Frank must not be entrapped into acceptance of such an office.

"No, no," cried Sheridan warmly; "I will not have you disposed of for a peppercorn rent. There is, doubtless, a latent motive for attaching you by the only vacant office not of a political nature; but, without pausing to examine it, avoid the snare! Consider what a falling-off from the high expectations we have been forming for you! If parliament is to be your sphere, the proffered office is as unbecoming a preliminary as the King's scullery would be an unworthy vestibule to St. Paul's or the House of Lords."

"I conceive it to be a mere demonstration of

private friendship from the Prince," observed Grenfell in an extenuating tone.

"Rather an act of friendship towards a private man whom he neither expects nor intends should become a public one," cried his companion with energy.

"It strikes me, however," persisted Grenfell, "that many men have distinguished themselves in political life who began by holding offices equally subordinate?"

"Perhaps so; but they were, probably, political offices, and certainly not accepted in a crisis like the present. A profound writer has observed that there are two modes of reaching the apex of a pyramid,—that of the reptile who crawls upwards, and that of the eagle which descends from its kindred sky. You, my dear Frank, must be the eagle, or nothing!"

"Still, since his Royal Highness has made it a personal request that I would accept this trifling appointment till he is able to attach me in a more satisfactory manner to his service"—

“ Again, I say, it is a snare to be avoided ! You will be supposed to set as poor a value upon yourself as others have dared to set upon you by acquiescence. Were I to turn lacquey in the service of the Prince Regent, the world would find excuses for me. My devotion to the Prince of Wales has demonstrated itself in a thousand unequivocal ways. My loyalty to him is admitted to be a passion rather than a sentiment. But you, my dear Frank, who have no motive for gratitude, no friendship of thirty years’ duration to blindfold your judgment, would be otherwise examined. The world is not apt to esteem a man higher than he estimates himself ; and you would be either valued at the rate of an opener of doors and counter of corks, or considered a sneak for accounting yourself of no higher moment.”

“ Nevertheless, if my refusal, however respectfully worded, were likely to estrange the Prince’s regard”— Frank was beginning.

“ My dear Grenfell,” interrupted Sheridan

in a tone more earnest than he was accustomed to use, "beware of adopting a formula of speech, or even thought, which will lead you you know not whither, and which has beguiled myself like a will-o'-the-wisp over many a barren moor and into many a miry boghole! Refuse, whenever or wherever acceptance were a fault, for it is a fault towards which none but ourselves are lenient. Make not too generous a cession of yourself,—I am an old courtier. I would fain see you attempt a pleasanter and more profitable career. The great are too much accustomed to be surrounded by hirelings and helots to appreciate love-service or the dedication of the free spirit. Such self-abnegation on my own part has been the cause of—— But no matter! I am running on as narrative old-age is apt to run on. I am apt to talk to you, Frank, as to a son. Next to my own, indeed, I know not the man so young whom I ever prized so dearly."

Though blinded just then both by love and

friendship, Grenfell had sagacity enough to discover the sincerity as well as the wisdom of these counsels, and Sheridan promised to get his non-acceptance so intimated to the Prince as to avoid all possibility of offence.

And now, as is usually the case when some great political measure involving the interests of the British throne and its hundred millions of subjects is in progress, honourable members began to inveigh against the cruelty of being detained in town by their parliamentary duties, in neglect of the national duty of fox-hunting. It was hard that a call of the House should altogether overpower the whistle of the whipper-in; and as bitter an outcry was raised against the galley-slavery of the senatorial vocation, as when, during the Queen's trial, or the Reform Bill, the grouse enjoyed a season's respite, and, for once, there were more head of black game on the moors than of Southern sportsmen.

To have secured their usual Christmas holi-

days, the two Houses would gladly have gabbled through the Regency Bill with as little ceremony as an act for enclosing a common : and the impatient members of the Lower House listened fretfully to the popularity-traps of Sir Francis Burdett, who had the honour of disputing single-handed the authority of parliament ; and to the ultra-whiggism of William Lamb, who voted an amendment that would have rendered the regency sovereignty, by the abrogation of all restrictions. Like Sir Philip Francis, when listening to one of the diffuse narratives of the Prince, the honourable members cried aloud for “ a result, a result, a result ! ” A Regent was, they knew, decreed them by Jupiter. All they wanted was to get him as quickly as possible upon the throne, with his thunderbolts in his hand, in order that they might go and shoot their own pheasants, “ suppress their own foxes,” and allow leisure to his Royal Highness to pick and choose his own ministers, and confer

with them touching the best method of drawing forth the wisdom and supplies of parliament.

Business, however, went as tardily on as public business usually does; Fate had decreed that two of the three heads of the constitutional Cerberus must be kept barking, the Lords and Commons in town, and the public on tenter-hooks. Between the epochs of assent to a Regency on the 31st of December, and its establishment on the 4th of February, it became the daily hoax of the clubs to report that such and such a public man had been "sent for" by the Prince. The blockade of the continent prevented indeed, at that period, those grand demonstrations of "sending for," which, in our own time, have been the means of killing some dozen pairs of post-horses, and burying a few King's messengers up to the ears in Alpine snows. There was no Italy for Lord Grey or Lord Grenville to fly to, in order to make the efforts of flying after him a matter

of wonder to the whole of Europe ; a manœuvre we have seen practised with such admirable and triumphant charlatanism.

There was indeed every pretext for assigning hesitation and vacillation to the movements of the Prince, which, at present, were only to be guessed at ; since those of parliament, which were ostensible, betrayed such strange inconsistency. Owing to divers unstatesmanlike oversights, the new " system would not work." From the delays of Ministers in providing a substitute for the royal authority in abeyance, the child's play of the old woman and her pig was ministerialized for the diversion of the country. Exchequer would not pay Treasury ; Privy Seal would not authorise Exchequer to pay Treasury ; Great Seal would not authorise Privy Seal to authorise Exchequer to pay Treasury ; and his Majesty's army and navy were likely to be cut short of their slops and rations. The House went into committee to ascertain by what process they could make the

fire begin to burn the stick, and the stick begin to beat the dog, in order that the "old woman"—Mr. Perceval—might get home that night; while Lord Grenville solemnly pointed out to the country the incompetency of men so slenderly acquainted with the powers and exactments of the Constitution.

But even when this material portion of the machinery was put in motion, the various clauses of the Regency Bill gave rise to innumerable amendments and re-amendments, admitted in one House and rejected in the other, according to the daily fluctuations of public opinion concerning the term of the King's recovery, and the intentions of the Prince. Courtiership had an arduous part to play between fear of offending the father, and dread of neglecting the son. No night of deliberation intervened between the setting and rising of the two suns,—both were at once above the horizon; and by this monstrous portent men's minds appeared to be bewildered. It could

not be forgotten that in the year 1789, while his Majesty's Ministers and the people's Opposition were deliberating upon the Regency Bill, the sovereign, restored to reason, suddenly reassumed his throne. In spite of medical predications, the predicament might even now be renewed. At the commencement of a new reign, treachery and ingratitude undergo no peril, save that of public contempt. The master to whose principles they fly into opposition is cold in the grave; but though

“Time was

That when the brains were out the man would die,”

the venerable sufferer might in the passing crisis be again visited by Divine mercy, and come forth warm with indignation to rebuke and chastise the invaders of his prerogative. Though Parliament had assumed the power of pronouncing upon his Majesty's incapacity, the fit moment for the resumption of his functions was left to the decision of the Queen and her council; of which junta the delibera-

tions being necessarily secret, it was impossible to guess at what moment their decree of deliverance might go forth.

At length, however, even the shabbiest of trimmers was compelled to have an opinion of his own, and to declare it ; and it was known meanwhile as a fact, and not rumoured as a rumour, that his Royal Highness had evinced so much leaning towards his early friends as to "send for" Lords Grey and Grenville to assist him in adjusting with dignity the mantle of royalty.

In these times of general curtailment and concentration, when almost every public office is shorn of its beams, and every private display of its ceremonial, the ministerial function is gradually subsiding into the slipshod ease of any other instituted for the despatch of business ; and, in the course of another reign or two, the pungent satire of Tom Thumb will probably cease to be laughed at by audiences, or winced at by Ministers and courtiers.

There is no longer an outward and visible analogy between Lord Grizzle, Noodle and Doodle, and the faithful humble servants of Government. The buckram and tinsel of ministerial life are happily abridged.

Lord Grey was the last who wore with a grace that preserved it from ridicule the high assumption of the elder school. Lord Grey had stern notions of the duties of statesmanship. In the cabinet of which he was to be chief there could be no shuffling, no triviality, no dishonourable sacrifices to expediency, no whispering on the back-stairs, no evil speaking, lying, or slandering. Uncompromised and uncompromising, he was a man to yield to no secret influence or inducements. By his union with Lord Grenville, a union strengthened by certain discrepancies of opinion, as the cohesion of plates of different metals is rendered firmer by their superficial inequalities and difference of organization, he acquired a still more steadfast solidity. Such men were

not to be trifled with. Even the future Regent must look with respect upon their political and social position.

It was said by the public journalists of France on the death of Prince Talleyrand, that he was the last of the aristocrats, "*que l'aristocratie s'en allait avec lui.*" The aristocracy of France departed ere Talleyrand was in his zenith, or he had never been allowed to figure so extensively on the scene. But the assertion might be made with far greater truth of England and Earl Grey.

Talleyrand possessed the vices, the superficial polish and accomplishments, and more especially the "unsubmergeability" of the aristocrat of an age of corruption ; but he had none of the higher graces of the Order. He might assume them as a cloak ; he never wore them as the natural adornment of his station. Of these, transparency of mind and dignity of manners are an essential portion. Talleyrand was mysterious and abstracted as the High-

priest of an Egyptian temple. To attain his opinion, or rather the opinion which at the moment he chose to assign, the labour was as great as to unroll a mummy. It is true that precious gums exhaled in the process; while valuable though mystic scrolls were sometimes to be deciphered among the papyrus wrappings and windings. But, after all, the main object of the search proved to be an obsolete unsightly mass, undeserving the concession of space it had for so many ages occupied on earth.

To those peculiarities Lord Grey presented the reverse. He was neither subtle, supple, nor to be trifled with as subsidiary to the caprices of royalty. The consequence was, that he was likely to be found by such a master as the Regent, as Trial by Jury was found by Napoleon,—“an excellent institution, but extremely inconvenient.” A Minister “*très incommode*” was certainly not the man for Carlton House. It was in fact the chief misfortune of George IV. to have found through life con-

venient friends, and Ministers highly "*commode*." The graceful fascinations of his affability were too apt to induce a sacrifice of opinion and principle on the part of those with whom he came in contact. But Lord Grey, with thirty years' experience of the hollowness of these superficial graces,—Lord Grey, aware that the Prince was in his turn a dupe to the subserviency of lesser mortals, was on his guard against the smiles of Bolingbroke,—

The humble and familiar courtesy,

The reverence he did throw away on slaves ;

slaves shortly afterwards openly inveighed against in parliament by the spirited speech of Lord Hatherton, as "the Gavestons and Spencers of the times."

That Lord Grey, in attending the summons of his former friend and future sovereign, must have been aware that, after being weighed in the balance, he should be found "*inconvenient*," is more than probable : but it was a duty to the country and to his expectant party to make

an attempt towards liberalizing the councils of the Regent. Both himself and his noble colleague were men who could lose nothing in public opinion from being overreached by petticoat or back-stairs influence. Their very fault in the eyes of the Regent—inflexibility—was a merit in the eyes of the world.

When called upon to frame the opening address of their gracious master to his ungracious parliament,—and little suspecting that his Royal Highness, like his royal sire under the tutelage of Lord Bute, was already provided with a speech-master,—they set about in all honesty a task predestined to be infructuous. The speech sketched by the two Whig leaders of 1810, which was much such a one as would be provided by a liberal Tory of 1840, proved unsatisfactory to the throne, or to “the influence behind the throne;” and though, like all influences behind all thrones, this invisible familiar conceived itself to be secure from detection, the screen was of course soon thrown

down, like that in his own admirable scene in the School for Scandal, and Lady Teazle—or Richard Brinsley Sheridan—stood betraying and betrayed.

The noble dupes were indignant. They had fancied themselves in treaty with royalty, and not with the unsuccessful manager of Drury-lane theatre. All the *morgue* of the aristocratic nature of unreformed times was roused by such a collision. Personal enmity, personal contempt, subsisted between the parties. It was impossible to pass over without remonstrance the affront to which they had been subjected, in having a state-paper, projected by them as ministers of state, submitted to the criticism and control of one who, though a master of rhetoric and the descendant of a long line of scholars, was a tyro in the comprehensive science of statesmanship, and in some degree a bankrupt in public esteem; and the firm and manly protest of Lords Grey and Grenville against the breach of confidence per-

petrated by the Prince, in submitting papers sketched at his royal instigation, and for his royal guidance, to the sneers of an unofficial personage, served only to stimulate the triumphant scorn of the master-manceuvrer of the age.

He had succeeded ! To borrow an after-phrase of one of Scott's characters, " he had angered the proud peat," by whom he was so disdainfully regarded !

The result served, like every stirring crisis, to develope and demonstrate the characteristic nature of all parties. Lord Grey, when angry, endited a letter to his Prince, in the tone assumed by princes when writing in wrath to their subjects ; and Sheridan an epigram on Lord Grey, which proved him a greater adept at squibbing in the style of Lord Rochester, than juris-dictating in the style of Lord Clarendon.

Scarcely was it known in London that the Whig lords had been defeated, partly by their

own self-consequence and partly by the counter-plots of Richard Brinsley, when the following skit was in the mouths of men of every party.

“ AN ADDRESS TO THE PRINCE REGENT.

—
In all humility we crave
Our Regent to become our slave ;
And, being so, we trust that he
Will thank us for our loyalty.
Then, if he'll help us to pull down
His father's dignity and crown,
We'll make him in some time to come
The greatest Prince in Christendom.”

CHAPTER VI.

Enter from different doors four patriots, who meet in the centre of the stage, and shake hands.

SOUR WIT. These patriots seem to equal the greatest politicians in their silence ?

MEDLEY. Sir, what they think, cannot well be spoke ; but you may conjecture a good deal from their shaking hands.

The Author's Farce (FIELDING).

RHYME is often enlisted on the side deficient in reason ! That winnowed portion of the public which constitutes the tribunal appealed to by honourable men, was of opinion that the opening of the new reign had been already degraded by so trivial and undignified a mode of transacting business as the submitting a state-paper, constructed by the advisers of the crown, to an after-dinner manager's-room sort

of review by private irresponsible friends, unpossessed of the confidence of the country, or rather, branded by its want of confidence. The Whig party, to many of whom Sheridan was endeared by his wit, his literary distinctions, and genial good-fellowship, required an explanation at his hands; and that celebrated letter to Lord Holland, which vainly attempted a hollow vindication, became a permanent monument of the vile uses to which the highest talent may become debased by shallow pretexts and equivocations.

It was said by one of Sheridan's most intimate associates, that he "wanted only to be in easy circumstances to become a man of the highest honour and integrity." To *become* a man of integrity is a singular progress to predict of a bosom-friend; nevertheless, such was the exact state of the case. The curious observer of after-times, when none survive to be grieved by animadversions on one whose talents have added such brilliant gleams to the

sunshine brightening our epoch, will probably enter more fully into the causes of this disastrous fact, pointing out the corrupt and contemptible state of a society where a man so splendidly endowed as Sheridan dared not be himself,—dared not be a poor man of talent; but was compelled to have recourse to the false glitter of equipages,* diamonds, and dinner parties, in order to maintain, in the estimation of the heir-apparent and the circles of fashion, the admiration he had conquered as a wit, a poet, and an orator.

Of all this underhand influence, meanwhile, Frank Grenfell was wholly ignorant. He was shown in confidence by Sheridan the sketch of a speech from the throne for the re-opening of parliament, with the remark, “ We are all trying our hands,—Lord Moira, Adam, the Prince himself for aught I know; and the copies are

* Vide Mrs. Inchbald's Letters from the Priory, in allusion to the figure made at Lord Abercorn's by Sheridan and his wife.

to be sent in, like sealed tenders for supplying oatmeal and rushlights to Greenwich Hospital."

That the "all," thus cavalierly clubbed together, included two individuals so high in the respect of the nation as Grey and Grenville, was not likely to occur to one who still entertained the reverence of a boy for great names as well as for great men. He knew that Sheridan was often dining confidentially and privately with the Prince; but, on the sole occasion on which Frank was of the party, it included also Lords Moira and Yarmouth, with several of his Royal Highness's household, whose peculiarly delicate position with regard to his Royal Highness and his political advisers rendered the introduction of politics at table impossible. The conversation was, on the contrary, studiously turned by the Prince himself upon general subjects; upon the lamentable details which were daily reaching London of the effects produced throughout the kingdom by

the severest and most inclement winter recorded by the memory of man ; or the curious circumstances attendant upon the splendid donation of pictures derived by Dulwich College from the recent death of Sir Francis Bourgeois, after being declined by two public bodies too penurious to build them house-room. The only Correggio and the finest Murillos in the kingdom were stated to be included in this collection, by the Prince ; who, though his royal patronage had as yet extended little beyond the daubs of Stroehling and the miniatures of Mrs. Mee, was known to be an enlightened and judicious amateur of the arts.

The world however, even that portion of the world which by experience knows better, is apt to fancy that, according to the proverb of *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, nothing but politics can be discussed in political houses ; and Frank Grenfell, on arriving that evening at Lady Mary Russell's, where it was known or conjectured that he came direct from Carlton

House, was accordingly watched with eager anxiety by Warkworth, and viewed with jealous spite by her ladyship. It was known that the heads of the Whig party had been in conference with the Prince. With some two or three exceptions, all London had fallen into the snare, and looked upon Lords Grey and Grenville as already in office. Not only Lord Raynham, but the Richelieu in Irish linen and broad-cloth, dedicating the first-fruits of infant statesmanship to Lady Mary Russell, felt convinced that Grenfell was after all the winning card.

Deceived by the Quixotism of Lord Moira, and mystified by the legerdemain of Sheridan, Frank was secretly of the same opinion. He now rejoiced that he had avoided connecting himself with the Tory household, which, though Lord Moira chivalrously pledged himself to the Prince he should never be called upon to sacrifice, was clearly incompatible with the adoption of Whig measures; and was grateful to Sheridan for having saved him from the snare.

Inexpressibly diverted, meanwhile, by the obsequious countenance re-assumed towards him by Lord Warkworth, and the peevish manner in which Lady Mary attempted his cross-examination concerning the powers that were to be, Frank returned to his lodgings to find Jack Hartwell installed before the fire, with a damp great-coat in one corner of the room, and a reeking umbrella in the other.

“Hartwell! my dear fellow! what wind has blown you hither?” cried Frank, welcoming him with a shake of both hands, and one of those cordial smiles which burst from the sunshine of an honest heart. “I am so sorry I was from home! I fear you have found neither meat, drink, nor clothing in my den?”

“Thank you, — thank you! I dined at Hatchett’s; and, if you look closer, you will perceive that the unparsonic coat on my back is one that calls you master. But how’s this? What makes you ‘smell so sweet, and talk so like a waiting-gentlewoman?’ I didn’t know

there were balls and parties going on at this time of the year ?”

“ We have nothing going on but parties, in the political sense ; no balls, no fêtes. My white cravat and waistcoat are matter of courtiership. I have been dining at Carlton House.”

“ The deuce you have ! That’s just what Woodbridge said ; that you would be over head and ears in politics, and not a hair of your head seizable !”

“ My two ears are very much at your service,” replied Frank laughing. “ But pray let them know, in the first place, what brings you from Leicestershire just now, when almanacks and barometers are promising us a change of weather ?”

“ I am not from home ; I left Hursley Park this morning.”

“ You have letters for me then, I hope, from Bessy ? I have not had a line from her this fortnight.”

“ You haven’t deserved one. Miss Grenfell

wrote to you once or twice in the tone of a reasonable being. You answered her in that of a petulant spoiled child ; and she bade me tell you that she should leave the froward boy to the influence of time, and write no more."

" She is very civil ; and I see by your face, my dear Hartwell, that she has enlisted you on her side ?"

" A beautiful woman has a good right to engage me as her ally against a fellow who, for three years of my life, kept me about as easy in mind as if we had been lodging together in a powder magazine. But what's all this about, Frank ? can't you and Woodbridge, who lived together as lovingly at Oxford as two coneys in a burrow, agree now that you have the three kingdoms to wander in, without jostling against each other ?"

" That question you must address to Sir Henry," replied Grenfell, becoming suddenly grave. " It was on his side that the offence arose.

“ I fancy he entertains precisely the same opinion ; nay, I am not sure but I am of his way of thinking. You could scarcely expect Achilles to be in good-humour just after the loss of his Briseis ! ”

“ To make your comparison correct, Miss Loveden ought to have been the captive of your Achilles, which she certainly was not.”

“ At all events, my dear boy, victors ought to show the grace of clemency. You diners at Carlton House must not be too hard upon your country cousins. Believe me, who have no motive for deceiving you, — believe your sister, who is equity itself,—that, whether wrong or right in the first instance, you are decidedly wrong now, in rejecting the palms of peace offered by your cousin. Sir Henry admits that he acted hastily and unkindly ; do not act unkindly in cold blood.”

“ Did Woodbridge inform you, then, of the rupture that has taken place between us ? ” demanded Grenfell in a tone of vexation.

“ Either he or your sister,—no matter which was first ! And by the way, sir, how comes it that they (for again I can scarcely decide which of the two was the speaker)—how comes it they were the only people to inform poor Jack Hartwell that the fellow he is fool enough to hold dearest on earth after his own family, is on the eve of matrimony ? You were afraid to announce the breach of your old promise that I should splice you—eh ? Dean Swinburn, I suppose, is the man for Lord Raynham’s niece ? ”

“ The Reverend John Hartwell is the man for Frank Grenfell. But nothing, alas ! is at present more problematical than Frank Grenfell’s marriage. The Raynhams give their niece only to the *protégé* of a Whig Regent ; and I was assured to-night by no less a person than Warkworth the Witless, that Ministers were safe.”

“ In which case, your match with Miss Love-

den is not—eh? Well! so much the better! I have no great notion of marriages that commence with a family quarrel. Let Woodbridge marry, if he likes; it is the vocation of the owner of such a place as Hursley Park. You and I, Frank, have no business to trouble ourselves with conjugation;—I, till I am a stalled ox; and you, till you are Chancellor of the Exchequer! Nay, for my part, I don't intend there shall be a Mrs. Hartwell till I can dignify her family coach with a mitre."

Frank Grenfell readily suspected that his friend was rattling on to give time for the subsiding of his warmth on the first mention of the name of Sir Henry Woodbridge.

"I should never have troubled myself, as you call it, with thoughts of matrimony in the abstract," said he. "Chance threw me into habits of intimacy with the woman, of all others, suited to me as a wife; but, knowing the precariousness of my situation in life, I so little

profited by my advantages, that for three years I tried to make her the wife of my cousin, by arguing both with her and him on their mutual merits! The plan I had conceived for those so dear to me, suited neither of them. Julia preferred my ragged self to Sir Henry Woodbridge; and Sir Henry Woodbridge preferred any one and every one to Julia, till he heard of our engagement. As regards the prudence of my attachment only do I avow myself in fault. I was under no pledge to calculate upon my cousin's caprices."

"Your sister wrote you word that Sir Henry admitted as much."

"I am glad to hear it, and much obliged to him."

"Well?"

"I have done."

"But *he* has not! Woodbridge has an overflowing heart, and will not think himself forgiven till his hand has been locked in yours."



“That is impossible,” replied Grenfell,—in so relenting a tone, however, as plainly indicated the softening of his heart.

“I am sorry to hear you so vindictive,” replied Jack, convinced that the reconciliation he was desirous to effect was all but secure; “for, unless I am much mistaken, you, who were born cousins and chose to be friends, will one day become brothers.”

Grenfell coloured deeply, and looked his curiosity.

“I was but eight-and-forty hours at Hursley Park,” resumed Jack, “every one of which served to convince me more and more, that Miss Grenfell’s deep distress at the family dissensions which have taken place regards the cousin quite as much as the brother.”

“You imagine that Bessy has attached herself to Woodbridge?” cried Frank in dismay.

“Why not, as easily as Miss Loveden to her brother?”

“Because, between *them* there is not the slightest sympathy of character!”

“Pho, pho! There may be no similarity or assimiltude of character; but there might be sympathy between the Admirable Crichton and King Cophetua’s beggar maid, or between the sage Maria Theresa and the blockhead Francis of Lorraine. I tell you, Miss Grenfell *is* in love with Woodbridge, and Woodbridge *getting* into love with *her* as quick as possible. Nothing like a common interest to bring people to a good understanding. For ten days past, they have been talking you over together from morning till night,—your marriage, your prospects, your hoity-toitiness, and all the rest of your amiable qualities,—till they have no patience to talk to any one else!”

“The evil I have been guarding against from the day my sister set foot in Hursley Park!” cried Frank, rising impetuously from his chair. “The greatest vexation and mor-

tification that could have befallen us ; and to come upon me at such a time ! ”

“ And why, pray ? Do you know a more noble-minded fellow in all England than your cousin ? Could she have made a more advantageous match ? Twenty thousand a year in a ring-fence !—in full possession of his estate, — an only son,— and so lazy that his wife may lead him with a rush ! ”

“ With his mother, and all the rest of those shabby hateful Maclarens, to circulate reports that he has been made the prey of an artful beggar ! and to despise us as adventurers,— as—as—as everything, in short, that Sir Henry Woodbridge so short a time since thought fit to call me ! ”

“ Nonsense, nonsense ! Young men of Woodbridge’s fortune are not required to marry for money. Your sister is as well born as himself. I cannot conceive a more suitable alliance.”

“ I can ; for I can conceive one sanctioned by Bessy Grenfell’s brother, which, I swear to God, this one shall never be !”

“ Frank,— I will not hear you so revengeful ! You have no right to oppose your sister’s happiness.”

“ I have a right to oppose her placing herself in a situation to be trampled upon, which I know she would be at Hursley Park. If Woodbridge dared turn round as he did on me, what might he not upon his wife ?”

“ He turned round on you in the excitement of an angry moment. . But Woodbridge is as right-minded a fellow as yourself, and incapable of acting harshly towards a woman.”

“ And then Lady Mary,— that silly, parading, ignorant old woman ! To what mortifications would she not expose poor Bessy !”

“ She has promised her son, if he marries to her liking, to go and dowager at Bath.”

“ To her liking !”

“ She is passionately fond of her niece. You

well know that she can scarcely bear her out of her sight."

"Yes,—as a niece, not as a daughter-in-law! Lady Mary has a thousand times informed me that her son must marry for connection. I am satisfied that she would oppose his union with my sister to the utmost of her power."

"Which luckily amounts to nothing."

"It amounts to the possibility of inflicting pain and insult. I shall write instantly to Bessy, and warn her of all this."

"I trust you will do no such thing. What I have told you is mere surmise. I may have deceived myself."

"At all events, without allusion to your name, but for my own satisfaction, I shall put my sister on her guard."

"You say you have done so ever since she became an inmate at Hursley, and what have your monitions availed?"

"Perhaps," cried Frank with bitterness, "it was my very uneasiness that first inspired her

with the sentiment. I ought to have been prepared for the feminine spirit of contradiction."

"You ought to have been prepared for the influence likely to be exercised by Woodbridge's merits over a discerning girl, who saw no one but himself and Sir Robert Crewe."

"You forget her refusal of Lord Warkworth."

"Did she refuse Don Adriano de Armado?" interrupted Jack. "Bless her little spirited soul! Well! if she rejected an earldom, I am convinced that she will become Lady Woodbridge. Love is the only thing stronger in a woman's heart than ambition."

"The Maclarens and their odious clique would accuse her of marrying Harry from ambition."

"Come, come,—that looks well again: I am glad to hear you call him Harry," cried Jack Hartwell cheerfully. "And now, be a good boy and do as I bid you, (which you never did when I was your pastor and master, in spiritual

and temporal authority over you,)—sit down and write to Miss Grenfell, not to order her to fall out of love with her cousin because you have fallen out with him yourself; but to say that, on being asked to forgive and forget, you forgot and forgave. You are not desired to make the first advances. You are not even wished to come half way. But it is a duty we poor sinful mortals owe each other in our mutual offences, to vouchsafe a step or two forwards to accept the proffered hand of a repentant friend.”

“ I grant it,— I grant it !” cried Grenfell with feeling. “ But what you have just told me renders it impossible for me to advance a single step towards Sir Henry Woodbridge. It must not be said that I am courting him for my sister.”

“ Who is there to say it, pray ?”

“ Old Crewe and the other mischief-makers in the neighbourhood of Swansborough.”

“ A reasonable being would care no more for

the sayings of such a Fuzboz as old Crewe than for the neighing of his pony."

"Well then, I do not choose Sir Henry to think it."

"Sir Henry is above any thinkings of the kind. I never allow people to impute blame unjustly to my pupils. I shan't permit you to abuse Woodbridge."

"I am not aware of having abused him."

"I shall, however, allow them to tax Mr. Francis Grenfell with pride, with impenitence, with hardness of heart, and more especially with malice against those who love him, and with self-conceit as the *protégé* of royalty, unless he consent to a reconciliation with a man who is burning to clasp him to his heart."

"My dear Hartwell," said Frank, drawing his chair closer to that of his friend, and leaning earnestly and affectionately towards him; "it is not in the nature of things for you to enter into my feelings and position. You have lived a smooth, happy, blameless life; the favoured

child of parents in easy circumstances, accustomed to the comforts and respectabilities of society, and indebted to no mortal living, save as every beneficed clergyman is indebted to a patron. You don't know what it is, Jack, to be born with family pretensions beyond your fortunes,—to be a pensioner—a poor relation ; to have stood face to face with a man who has dealt out money to you as you have dealt it out to beggars, and read in his scornful countenance the long detail of your debtorship. If you had ever experienced this gnawing, cankerous, envenomed wound, you would feel all the hesitation I experience, and perhaps more !”

“ My dear boy, this is all vastly well-sounding,” cried Hartwell, really moved, yet affecting a tone of reprehension ; “ but there is too much Pizarro in it for my taste. I don't like these stage touches, Frank ; keep them for Mr. Sheridan—for Carlton House—for what you will ; and, instead of poetical epithets, give me a little plain sense and a little sterling feeling. I won't

plague you any more to-night, because I'm too sleepy after rattling all day in a stage-coach to reason to the purpose ; but to-morrow I'll come and breakfast with you. You're too fine a gentleman for me to invite you to come to me at Hatchett's, which I suppose you call the White Horse Cellar, but where we've eaten our broiled bone before now together, when, sick to death of Oxford, we thought any hole or corner in London a Paradise ! What o'clock do you breakfast ?"

"At nine, if you will," replied Frank, not choosing to put off his friend by owning that he had promised to breakfast with Sheridan at eleven ; and certain that, with good management, he should be able to keep both engagements. "At nine I shall be ready for you. God bless you, and good night !"

CHAPTER VII.

You know not when
A woman gives away her heart. At times,
She knows it not herself. Insensibly
It goes from her. She thinks she hath it still
When she reflects, while smoothly runs the course
Of fortune. But if haply comes a check,
Aghast, forlorn she stands to find it lost,
And with it all the world !

SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

It was a circumstance both painful and perplexing to Sir Robert Crewe, that from the day of his being summoned to consultation by Lady Mary Woodbridge, to prevent his young friend the Baronet from shooting or being shot by his cousin, he was never again able to obtain access to Hursley Park. In vain did his pony amble

up to the hall-door about luncheon time ; in vain, staff in hand, did he cut across the country on foot, and attempt to drop in just before dinner. Mr. Benton was perhaps not quite satisfied with the extent of appetite and curiosity betrayed by the General in the course of his peace-making breakfast ; for the butler's reply was always, " Sir Henry has rode over to Swansborough,"—" My lady has just druv out in her pony chaise,"—or " Miss Grenfell is about in the village, I can't take upon me, Sir Robert, to say where." The whole family was decidedly " not at home."

It occurred to the old gentleman as extraordinary, that Sir Henry, my lady, and Bessy Grenfell should choose for their expeditions weather which nothing but the eagerness of his curiosity determined even him to confront. But though his misgivings at length found vent in, " I trust, Benton, her ladyship took no cold from the snow-storm in which she was driving out the last time I called ? Upon my

soul and honour, it was a degree of cold to have chilled a Cossack !” Benton remained unsoftened. “ He was much obliged to Sir Robert; her ladyship had suffered from a slight cold, but she was out again to-day for the first time.”

There was no luncheon, no welcome for General Marplot. What orders Sir Henry might have privately issued on the subject it is impossible to guess; but that Lady Mary had no share in her confederate’s exclusion was clear, from her often-expressed wonder concerning what was become of him.

“ Poor Sir Robert Crewe must be lost !” she exclaimed one day at dinner. “ He has not been here this age ! The severity of the season has perhaps dealt hardly with the poor old lady. Remind me, Bessy, to inquire the first time we drive over to Swansborough.”

And the grave silence maintained throughout her ladyship’s monologue by Benton, who stood adding the bread-sauce to her wing of par-

tridge, proved that he was acting under orders, though not those of his lady.

Sir Henry had, in truth, determined on the General's final exclusion from a house where he had long proved a serious nuisance. Gentlemen contrive to hear more than ladies of all that is going on in their circle; and young Woodbridge soon became aware that the report of his *tête-à-tête* before breakfast with his cousin had been circulated through the county, in a way to be highly injurious to one party, and highly disagreeable to the other. The young Danstons quizzed him, without mercy, upon his conquest of the grave, reserved Miss Grenfell; and when Jack Hartwell made his appearance from Leicestershire, his first solicitude (after ascertaining the state of health of the Signorina Donna,) was to inquire from his quondam pupil the origin of a rumour which he had heard from his father, and which the venerable rector of Hursley heard from Sir Robert Crewe, expressly at-

tacking his own prudence, and the fair fame of his cousin.

It was the spirited tone in which Sir Henry rebutted and resented this attack which was the means of opening Jack Hartwell's eyes to the change which had taken place in his feelings towards Miss Grenfell. And when Sir Henry threatened in his wrath to call out the gallant General of ribbons and crosses, or give him a sound thrashing, Hartwell could not help thinking that he was nearer to love and matrimony now than when trying to fancy himself into a passion for Miss Loveden by quoting the enthusiasm of others in her favour. Satisfied, however, that such a match was the very thing to secure Sir Henry's happiness, he wisely abstained from making the smallest comment on his inconsistency; enlarging only upon his hopes that the mischievous anecdotes of Sir Robert Crewe might not reach the ears of Lord Teviot, who, according to his cousin Peter Hartwell's account, was wild to promote his

son's marriage with the accomplished sister of that very rising young man, the witty and accomplished Francis Grenfell.

Fortunately for Bessy, she was safe from all suspicion of the impertinences to which her fair fame was subjected ; or, harassed as she still was by the critical position of her brother, it would have been impossible for her to preserve a countenance sufficiently cheerful to satisfy Lady Mary, or a heart sufficiently light to afford occupation to Sir Henry by becoming the sharer of his rides and walks, and the confidante of his plans.

The barrier of reserve between them was, in fact, now thrown down. Miss Grenfell felt herself privileged to use her own discretion in submitting to the interdictions of a brother so inaccessible to her own entreaties as Frank ; while her good sense suggested that Sir Henry's avowal of an attachment to Miss Loveden ought to set at rest all apprehension of a partiality for herself. Since her cousin was in love

with Julia, she need not scruple to make him her friend; nay, the interests of poor Frank seemed to require that she should do her utmost to repair the schism springing up between the families. It was her duty as well as her delight to offer to the disappointed Woodbridge every consolation her society could afford.

A beautiful girl, who seriously undertakes the task of comforting an idle young man in the loneliness of a fine old country-place, and with all the appliances and means to boot of saddle-horses, phaetons, good roads, and secluded lanes, is pretty sure of success. To relieve the weariness of spirits hanging upon her poor cousin, instead of retiring every morning after breakfast to the library, Bessy brought forth her favourite authors and read aloud from them chosen passages; and as the chosen passages of Bessy Grenfell's favourite authors were of course of a description little suited to the taste of Lady Mary (a devoted patroness of Ann of Swansea and Francis

Lathom), the obliging aunt soon either nodded in her chair, or betook herself to her dressing-room for a good scold with the house-keeper, or the enditement of a particularly private despatch to some member of the vast clan of Maclaren.

In time, Sir Henry began to find himself interested in Bessy's extracts; and, on hearing her peevishly reminded one morning by Lady Mary, that "she seemed to have quite forgotten her drawing, that it was full a month since she had seen a pencil in her hand," (a hint which her ladyship intended should send her to her own room,) Sir Henry entreated her, as it was a rainy day, to bring her easel into the morning-room, where he, in his turn, would undertake the task of reading aloud. By this preposterous proposal on the part of her lazy son, Lady Mary was so utterly astonished, that she actually forgot to remonstrate touching the litter which such unprecedented proceedings would create in her trim orderly apartment.

In this domestic predicament, accordingly, were the young people discovered one morning by Sir William Beckford, who, having arrived on business to Oak Hill from Brighton, where his family were settled for the winter, came to pay his neighbourly compliments to Lady Mary.

“How could I be such an ass,” was his secret ejaculation as he entered the room, “as to imagine that Woodbridge would ever take a fancy to one of my girls (who in a room without a piano are about as entertaining as the family pictures hanging to the wall), with a fine, intelligent, companionable young woman such as this, always at his elbow?”

Though heartily wishing him back at his lodgings on the Steyne, Sir Henry was of course friendly in his welcome to his good-humoured neighbour. But Beckford was out of spirits; and his brother Baronet found it difficult to hit upon the right chord for harmony.

“We miss Oak Hill very much this winter,” said Bessy politely; “but I reconcile myself to my loss by knowing that Mary and her sisters are probably much better amused at Brighton.”

“Amused at Brighton? With what?” — cried Sir William fractiously. “With counting the bills in the windows of empty lodging-houses? Brighton and London, you know, are like the two buckets of a well; when one is full and rising, the other must be empty and going down. Town is as full just now as the day before the Birthday; and consequently there is not a soul in Brighton, except Martha Gunn, and a few dowagers.”

“Next winter, the Regent will bring back its popularity,” said Sir Henry soothingly. “We shall see the Pavilion become one of the royal palaces.”

“You may see it, but depend upon it I shan’t,” replied Sir William. “I don’t intend to pay fifteen guineas a week again in a hurry, to be shrivelled up by the easterly winds, while

Oak Hill, comfortable and cheerful as it is, stands empty. I never wished to leave it ; but, somehow or other, we were all getting so hypped at home, that when Lady Beckford assured me Selina and Sylvia would never be themselves again without a little warm sea-bathing, I thought it my duty not to refuse a month or two at Brighton."

"The girls were in such high spirits at the thought of the excursion !" said Bessy courteously.

"Ay, at the thought of it !" cried Sir William ; "but the reality has proved a plaguy mortification. What society there is at Brighton this winter is of what silly people call uncommonly select, or what Geramb calls, in contradistinction to the '*élite de Dieu*,' the '*élite du Diable*.'"

"The winter company at Brighton is always good," observed Woodbridge.

"Too good by half, for they will have nothing to say to us provincials."

“Come, come, not so hard on your country neighbours!” cried Woodbridge. “Quiz us in reason, and we submit! Lady Beckford and her daughters banished from society? when last year in London I saw them adored by Duchesses, courted by Countesses, and able to do as they pleased with all the finest of fine people? No, no!”

“As long as the Miss Beckfords and their music-books were to be had for asking for,—as long as my daughters were allowed to entertain people’s company like fire-eaters or the galanté-show,—I admit that it was ‘my dear Sylvia!’—‘my sweet Selina!’—‘my precious Mary!’ But, now I have put a stop to their exhibitions, they are only ‘the three Miss Beckfords.’ Glee and trios being out of the question, our acquaintance are beginning to discover that the Brighton rooms are too small to admit of inviting more than one sister, or, at most, two at a time. Dinner parties and Duchesses have dropped us altogether; and

Countesses send their cards instead of dropping in to hear the rehearsal of Cherubini's last overture."

"The act and deed of abdication is at least your own," said Sir Henry. "You did not choose your house to be found so dangerously agreeable."

"My dear sir, my friend Crewe assured me that you and every rational being of our acquaintance voted it devilishly disagreeable!"

"Old Crewe again!" exclaimed Sir Henry with undisguised disgust. "Who on earth would think of listening to the suggestions of Sir Robert Crewe!"

Bessy directed a significant smile towards her cousin, who blushed consciously in reply; and Sir William Beckford, noticing this interchange of glances, became more than ever convinced that an understanding of a tender nature subsisted between the young people.

"At all events, his advice, in this instance, is justified by the result!" cried he. "The

fact has proved that my daughters were courted for their musical talents, not for their personal claims upon society. It was voted an economical thing to engage Sir William Beckford's family with flattery and lemonade, instead of hiring professional performers. I remember once, when old Lady Naas (one of their most passionate *prôneuses*) dined with us *en famille*, the girls proposed to amuse her after tea with a little music. 'No, no,' cried the old lady; 'as there is no one here, let us have a little rational conversation. You can come and sing to me, you know, my dears, when I've got company to entertain. For my own share, I detest the perpetual scrape of a fiddler.' "

"Do not expect us to sympathize in your Brighton disappointments," said Bessy, really sorry to see the good-natured man so mortified. "We shall have you back at Oak Hill all the sooner for them!"

"No, indeed," replied Sir William. "Lady

Beckford is of opinion, that, since warm sea-baths have done nothing for poor Mary's debility, we must get her to town as soon as possible, to be under the care of Sir Henry Halford. The poor girl is so very low, that we are really growing uneasy."

"I trust a London season will restore her," said Bessy goodnaturedly. "A little racket and gaiety may perhaps do more than the doctors."

"Why, yes; and it is expected that London will be unusally gay this spring. Our friends are in great spirits. Our party is full of expectation.—By the way, what is this Sir Robert Crewe has been telling me about my friend Frank? Can it be true, that at the moment of entering public life he chooses to hamper himself with a wife,—a poor, expensive wife? Charming girl, I admit; but scarcely steady enough for such a whirligig as Frank Grenfell!"

"Nothing is at present settled," replied Bessy, greatly embarrassed.

“Settled, indeed!” reiterated Sir William. “All the affairs of everybody in England appear to be at sixes and sevens! From Government down to old Crewe, no one seems to have a day’s plans steadily before him! The General has got some crotchet into his head about applying for a government in the West Indies.”

“Anything that took him out of this neighbourhood!” groaned Sir Henry.

“Lady Crewe, you know, is grand-aunt to Lord Grenville’s uncle, or something of that kind.—(I never know about people’s relationships!) And, as the General says, a military man without influence in the country belongs to no party, and may be beholden to any.”

“I doubt whether any will ever be beholden to him,” cried Woodbridge again.

“I don’t know. He has great expectations. From something Sir Robert let fall, I suspect he has been writing to Frank Grenfell to promote his interests at Carlton House.”

"My brother has enough to do in looking after his own," replied Bessy. But she was prevented saying more. Lady Mary, just returned from a drive of shopping to Swansborough, in which she had declined the company of Bessy, now rolled into the room with the dignity of a seventy-four in a swell.

"Pretty well, thank you ;—I believe I may say pretty well," said she, in reply to the cordial "How are you, my dear Lady Mary?" of Sir William Beckford. "Quite an unexpected pleasure seeing you just now in Hampshire, and a still more unexpected pleasure seeing you here! I rejoice to find, my dear Sir William, that you are not included in the number of my dear and valued friends banished at present from Hursley Park!"

"I trust I have done nothing to merit such a sentence," replied Sir William good-humouredly, perceiving, from the direction of her ladyship's furious glances, that she was talking at her son. Sir Henry, however, continued to

open with an air of apparent unconsciousness the leaves of a new number of the Edinburgh Review which he was cutting ; while Bessy, really unaware of her ladyship's meaning, opened her large, dark, sleepy eyes with a look of interrogation.

“ It would be a very great sorrow to me,” resumed her ladyship, perceiving that no one would oblige her by asking questions, “ to find that my esteemed friend, Lady Beckford, or yourself, (like others whom I could name,) were scandalously denied entrance into a house of which I am by right and legal bequest the occupant.”

“ Such an exclusion is not within the possibility of things,” observed Sir Henry with complete *sang-froid*. “ Sir William and Lady Beckford are as incapable, as I trust we are ourselves, of creeping and sneaking into a family for the purpose of getting initiated into its secrets, then circulating them in a maliciously garbled state to their prejudice in the

neighbourhood ! Such, mother, was the provocation which determined me that Sir Robert Crewe should never obtain entrance at Hursley while I remain a resident with my family."

" It is no such thing ! " cried Lady Mary in a fury. " Your motives, unhappy boy, were of a very different nature ! Harry, you have deceived me !—and you are yourself the most deceived and deluded of human kind ! "

" Very likely ! A man has no right to pretend, at two-and-twenty, to be of sterner stuff than the rest of the world," he replied cheerfully. " But I had rather be fool than knave, mother ; and so long as you do not accuse me of lying and slandering *à la Crewe*, like Sir Peter Teazle, I make you a present of my character."

" Own rather that, like Sir Peter Teazle, you are the victim of art and artifice ! " cried Lady Mary. " Yes ! I perfectly understand why it has been found convenient to exclude all morning visitors from Hursley Park ! Sir

William Beckford was admitted by chance ! You thought him at Brighton, and did not insert his name in the list surreptitiously supplied to my misguided servants."

Miss Grenfell had some difficulty in restraining a smile. The idea of her indolent cousin taking the trouble to supply lists of company, either overtly or "surreptitiously," was too ridiculous.

"If you think my word needs confirmation," said Sir Henry, becoming gradually angry, "you have only to ring for Benton, who will inform you that Sir Robert Crewe is the single individual whom I have ever taken the liberty of refusing access to your ladyship."

"And why, pray?" screamed his mother. "Because you knew that, of all this neighbourhood, the poor dear General was my nearest and dearest friend ! the friend of your father, Harry ! the friend of both your grandfathers ! and therefore incapable of standing,

without remonstrance, to see you fall blindfold into the snare so cunningly spread for your inexperienced and unwary footsteps !”

“ I should be somewhat surprised to find the old blockhead remonstrating with me, even were there grounds for his interference !” retorted Sir Henry. “ But I am unaware of”—

“ Who is ever aware that he is duped ?” cried her ladyship, swelling as if guilty of a most original aphorism. “ Doubtless you have been artfully inspired with mistrust of one of the most honourable men in his Majesty’s service,—a major-general, Harry, and Knight of the Bath ! It suited the plans of certain persons that the friend most in the habit of dropping in at Hursley should be kept out of reach ! Sir Robert would have felt it his duty to warn you, — Sir Robert might have felt it his duty to apprise me ! and, consequently, Sir Robert was banished our society !”

Sir William Beckford, unwilling to be the

witness of the family breeze which he saw was gradually blowing up, now addressed to Lady Mary some trifling remark concerning the pretty agreeable bride at Danston Grange. But the theme was ill-chosen for pacificatory purposes.

“ Yes, my dear Sir William ! Our friends the Danstons are, as you observe, vastly fortunate in their family ! ” whined her ladyship, though Sir William had observed nothing of the kind. “ *Their* son has made a prudent and becoming match ! *Their* son has submitted to be guided by the wishes of his family.”

“ On the contrary, my dear madam, my friend the squire himself informed me, he was very anxious his son should have matched into some other family. He happens to disapprove marriages between cousins ”—

“ Who does not ? ” interrupted Lady Mary with bitterness.

“ But having ascertained by inquiry that

his kinswoman was a most meritorious young woman, he admitted that no man has a right to maintain his prejudices to the deterioration of human happiness, and bestowed his hearty consent and blessing on the young couple."

"By which he proved himself a great man," observed Sir Henry calmly. "There is no greater conqueror, in my opinion, than the man who overcomes his prejudices."

"At all events, he was fairly consulted by his son," cried Lady Mary, "and not left to be informed by the common rumours of the county that a daughter-in-law was about to be forced upon his acceptance."

"I have little doubt, if we knew the exact state of the case," observed her son, laughing, "that it was from Sir Robert Crewe old Danston first heard a hint of the match."

"A hit! a palpable hit!" my dear Woodbridge," cried Sir William. "I happened to be dining at the Grange, when Crewe quoted some northern correspondent or other who had

announced to him that something very like courtship was going on between Henry Danston and his cousin Emily, and, for a moment, I remember the old people were uneasy. When the General went away, we settled it that the report was only *a Crewe!*”

“ True friends are often repaid with ingratitude !” observed the old lady sententiously : — “ however, I confess myself unfeignedly thankful to Sir Robert for having opened my eyes !”

“ With *my* affairs, meanwhile, I should seriously recommend him not to meddle !” replied Sir Henry firmly. .

“ You have taken pretty good care of that, by driving your father’s old friend from your gates,” retorted her ladyship. “ It would have been vastly inconvenient to both you and Miss Grenfell to have your charming *tête-à-têtes* broken in upon by a friend not willing to see Sir Gideon Woodbridge’s son entrapped into

a ruinous and fatal marriage with one of his poor relations."

Miss Grenfell, suddenly enlightened as to the meaning of Lady Mary's insinuations, now started up — actually to her feet, — and was about to rush from the room.

"Stay, dearest cousin!" cried Sir Henry, flying after her, and gently leading her back to her place. "As Sir William Beckford is fortunately present to witness the agreeable scene which my mother has prepared for us. do me the great kindness to remain, and listen to my explanations!"

The poor girl, scarcely able to breathe, sank into her chair, which being close beside that of the kind-hearted Sir William, he hastened to offer her the same kind encouragement he would have bestowed upon a daughter of his own.

"Do not agitate yourself thus, my dear!" said he: "nothing can occur to distress you,

—nothing can transpire that will not do you honour. Be composed !”

But composure of mind or manner was alike impossible, when Sir Henry Woodbridge proceeded to acquaint Lady Mary of the slanders and scandals circulated concerning her by the mischief-making Sir Robert.

“ You summoned him hither, I find, mother, one morning, with the view of effecting a reconciliation between myself and Frank Grenfell : at that moment Bessy was, by my invitation, and with the knowledge of your whole establishment, engaged with me in conversation in an open drawing-room,—listening to my apologies, and kindly promising to mediate for me with her brother. This simple circumstance has your friend — yes, mother, your friend Sir Robert !— rendered the groundwork of the most infamous surmises ; and if, instead of denying him the door, I did not send him flying out of the window in return for his defamation of my cousin, it was less in reve-

rence for his years, than to avoid introducing a name like Bessy's into a quarrel so disgraceful."

"If Sir Robert Crewe circulated such reports as you affirm, he is certainly to blame," observed Lady Mary coldly: "but, perceiving what is going on, it was natural that, as my friend, he should fancy he saw a little more than the truth." -

"And what is the truth? — or what has been going on?" cried Sir Henry, out of patience.

"Why, just this,—that Frank Grenfell, after deluding away from your arms the only woman suitable to you as a wife, threw into them his sister, in order to complete, at your expense, the provision for the family."

Bessy Grenfell trembled too violently to speak, — not with terror, but with indignation.

"By contriving to have you always closeted here alone with her, Frank, who is well acquainted with your weakness, knew that no-

thing would be easier than to talk, and read, and coax you into a mood which you would easily be made to mistake for a tender passion."

"Mother!" cried Sir Henry, with flashing eyes and heightened colour, "you know better than I can tell you, that there is not the slightest foundation for these assertions! You know better than I can tell you, that it was in compliance with your reiterated and tormenting letters of recal that I returned to Hursley. You know better than I can tell you, that, but for the interposition of your legal authority to detain her, Frank Grenfell would have carried off his sister on that fatal night, and allowed her to return to us no more. For her happiness, (if these insults to my cousin are to be repeated,) it would have been better if he had done so: but *I* should have been the sufferer; I should have lost the wise, patient, and soothing counsel which, for a month past, she has sacrificed her time and inclinations to bestow upon the repentant adversary of her brother."

"Lady Mary will, I am convinced, admit the justice of all this," said Sir William Beckford mildly, and unfeignedly moved by the distress of Miss Grenfell and the generous frankness of her cousin. "Lady Mary will own"—

"I will own nothing," interrupted the angry old lady, "except that I have been shamefully used; and that Sir Henry Woodbridge will throw away all his prospects in life by marrying my niece."

Again Bessy was about to rise and leave the room, and again she was urgently detained by Sir Henry.

"Do not make yourself uneasy, madam!" cried he, indignantly addressing his mother. "No such happiness is in store for me. Bessy is too well acquainted with the faults and follies of my nature to undertake the charge of such a cub. I myself heard her assert to Miss Loveden, that she could derive as much pleasure from the conversation of one of the gamekeepers as from mine."

Amid all her distress, Bessy raised her astonished eyes towards her cousin on hearing this; but Sir Henry was proceeding.

“The attention she has kindly vouchsafed me,” he continued, “has been an act of grace. That I could wish to esteem it more, I will not pretend to deny. That I have been becoming gradually aware of the charms of such a companion,—that I feel her affection to be indispensable to my happiness, I am proud to own in presence of Sir William Beckford. Conscious, however, of the unworthiness of my idle, uncultivated character to attract her esteem, I might have remained weeks and months not daring to acknowledge to Bessy my discovery that she alone is the woman to make me happy,—that my fancy for Julia Loveden was a whim of boyish vanity,—that I never loved till now,—never till now knew how to appreciate the charms of a truly feminine character. But you have generously afforded me a plea for breaking through all

reserve ! Forgive me, therefore, dearest Bessy, for seizing this opportunity for a public declaration of my sentiments. Accept all the reparation in my power for the insults to which you have been so scandalously exposed. I am not such a coxcomb, my dear cousin, as to imagine you will accept this abrupt offer of the heart and hand of a man who but a few weeks ago was on the point of offering them to another. But do not at once dismiss my pretensions. Give me time to prove to you the firmness of an affection which, unsuspected by myself, has long held the utmost influence in my heart. Give me time to prove that I am not wholly undeserving of such a wife, and the devotion of my future existence shall repay your indulgence."

Sir Henry had risen, and was hanging over Bessy Grenfell's chair as he pronounced the last words of this appeal; while Lady Mary, as she sat contemplating the humility of his address, literally panted with indignation.

At length, when Sir Henry attempted to fold the hands of his weeping cousin within his own, the old lady burst forth.

“I can bear this no longer,” cried she, stalking towards the door. “I will not stay here to witness the ruin of my only son!”

The door closed violently upon her exit, and Sir William Beckford, unwilling to be a restraint upon the young people, would fain have seized the opportunity to depart, and leave them to the free discussion of their affairs; but Miss Grenfell, as soon as she recovered breath for utterance, appealed to him as the father of daughters, not to withdraw his protection and advice from her in such an emergency.

CHAPTER VIII.

Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.

MAXIM OF CONFUCIUS.

“ IN the first place, then, my dear young lady, since you consider my advice worth asking for,” said Sir William, (while Woodbridge, unwilling to expose his cousin’s emotion to the notice of the servants, flew off to procure a glass of water,) “ I bespeak your indulgence for my poor friend, Lady Mary. She is a woman of hasty temper and great self-consequence, both of which have been unfairly wrought upon by that busy, silly fellow, Sir Robert, the cause of half the domestic commotions in the county.”

“ I am not likely to be impatient with my aunt,” replied Bessy mildly ; “ she has been a kind friend to me ; as far as her nature permitted, invariably kind ; and, unless when happening to interfere with her son’s interests, I am satisfied that she would still deal justly by me and mine. My tears, dear Sir William, are not excited by anything Lady Mary has said or done. They express only my sense of my cousin’s generosity, and my own miserable dependence.”

“ There is nothing in either which ought to distress you. A brilliant and, I truly believe, happy destiny awaits you.”

Bessy interrupted him by impatiently waving her head, while the tears coursed each other down her cheeks. She accepted in silence the water offered her by Sir Henry, who now hastily and with a flushed and anxious countenance re-entered the room ; but continued to direct her conversation to Sir William.

“ The favour I have to ask of you,” said

she, as firmly as she was able, and taking a paper from her bosom, “ is, that you will see Lady Mary and communicate to her this letter. It is a pressing invitation from my cousin Lord Waterton, enclosing a letter to herself, which I know requests permission to send for me in a day or two. But for what has just occurred, it was not my intention even to acquaint Lady Mary with the receipt of these ; for I conceived them to originate in a recent family misunderstanding with which it is needless to trouble you. The circumstances, however, which have just occurred render it indispensable for me to claim her ladyship’s sanction to my acceptance of Lord Waterton’s invitation. Here it is impossible for me to remain. I have only to thank Heaven for providing me so opportunely with a refuge.”

“ And not a word to me, Bessy !” cried Sir Henry, advancing towards her with a reproachful countenance.

“ To you, my dearest cousin, what can I

say?" she replied with great feeling. "I dare not trust myself to express the gratitude with which I recognize the generous nobleness of your conduct, for my emotion might lead you to anticipate a favourable answer to your proposals."

"I do not—I will not—I promise you that I will not press for your immediate acceptance!" cried Sir Henry eagerly. "Only give me leave, either here, at Lord Waterton's, or wherever you take up your residence, to pursue those attentions which, I was beginning to trust, might eventually win upon your regard. Grant me this, dearest Bessy, and I shall be content."

"I cannot," replied Miss Grenfell with earnestness. "I can never become your wife. Everything is against it. The enmity betwixt you and my brother, — between myself and Lady Mary, and, above all, the nature of those obligations which would create a feeling too humiliating to subsist safely between married people, — render our union impossible."

“ I will not hear you say so !” exclaimed Sir Henry. “ As my wife, the feeling you are unkind enough to admit would be at once extinguished. It is only as a cousin that the word obligation could ever recur to your mind.”

“ As my brother assured you on that wretched night, you cannot enter into our situation or sentiments. I own,” continued Miss Grenfell, in a less assured tone, “ that, had I not been startled to reason by this sudden violence on the part of Lady Mary, the mode of life we have lately pursued together might have insensibly led me to other conclusions ; and, before I was conscious of a change of sentiment, I should have become too strongly attached to remain sensible of the incompatibilities between us. Luckily, I have been roused in time. Do not consider me ungrateful, Harry, — do not consider me insensible, if I declare that, highly as I honour the courage and generosity of your conduct, I can never — never become your wife.”

“*Never* is a wide word, my dear Miss Grenfell, and you are still so young !” remonstrated Sir William, discerning from Woodbridge’s change of countenance the pain these protestations were inflicting. “Allow me to make the necessary communication to Lady Mary, and bring you her reply. I leave it to my friend Harry to press his suit during my absence.”

“No, do not leave us here!” cried Bessy, starting up. “I must not expose myself to my cousin’s persuasions, or the malice of a Sir Robert Crewe. Great God ! could my brother have dreamed that my good name was exposed to the slanders of that unprincipled old man ?”

“I have still another word to suggest to you, my dear,” said Sir William Beckford, returning from the door towards his young friends. “Before I present these letters to Lady Mary, which, as claiming a right in you, she may in her present mood feel disposed to resent, what say you to a little visit to my girls ? I return to Brighton to-morrow. I

need not tell you how rejoiced they would be to have you among them ; and, lest we should meet Sir Robert Crewe on the road," continued he with a smile, " the Oak Hill housekeeper (who is dying to get off to her mistress and the young ladies) shall take care of us both."

Bessy coloured, and remained silent. The plan was a delightful one. She had dreaded becoming the inmate of uncongenial people like the Watertons. It appeared, however, unreasonable to encroach upon the hospitality of those on whom she had so little claim as the Beckfords.

" When I came here an hour ago," added Sir William, " I had so little idea of anything having occurred to make your situation at Hursley less agreeable, that I admit I did not dream of making this invitation. But if you want an excuse to yourself, my dear, Miss Grenfell, for accepting what is very sincerely offered, be assured that your arrival will prove a serious advantage to my moping invalids.

Your face will afford a better cure for poor Mary's headaches, than either sea-bathing or her father's lectures."

Still Bessy hesitated. She was beginning to be cautious about incurring obligations. An observation from Sir Henry in favour of going to the Watertons, decided her to accept Sir William's friendly proposal. Sir Henry—like a man, if not actually in love, in a fair way to become so,—did not in fact altogether relish the thoughts of his cousin's sojourn at Brighton,—a place of duty to hussars, and pleasure to members of parliament. Lord Warkworth, too, would perhaps repair thither some idle Saturday for change of air and continuance of courtship. The Brighton scheme was highly objectionable. His mother was far less likely to take exception at Bessy's determination to visit the nearest surviving relative of her father."

"Since you are so kind, then," said Miss Grenfell, addressing her reply to Sir William,

“let me beg of you to explain my intentions to Lady Mary, and tell me at what o’clock I shall be ready for you to-morrow?”

“I meant to have started at seven. At eight, if you please, as there is now a lady in the case, Mrs. Hobson and I will be here. You gratify me very much, my dear, by your acceptance; and I promise you in return to make everything smooth with Lady Mary.”

And by the mortified air with which Sir Henry Woodbridge stood watching her departure from the room, Miss Grenfell saw, as she quitted it, that she had attained the object of her determination in favour of Brighton,—to prove to her cousin that her decision against his suit was firm and irrevocable.

And now it was the reserved and dignified Bessy Grenfell’s turn to retire to her chamber, and muse and weep over the initiatory roughnesses of the course of true love. The shocks of the last hour had been almost too trying for a person of such deep sensibility. Exposed to

a humiliating accusation, attacked in her reputation, and enriched by a declaration of attachment from her valued cousin! — too much misery and too much happiness at once!

Though disposed to fear that chivalrousness of feeling towards a woman oppressed and insulted had an extensive share in his proposal of marriage to herself, Bessy had never at any moment conjectured that her cousin's affections were seriously pledged to Miss Loveden. It was neither jealousy of Julia, nor contempt for Sir Henry's volatility, that induced her mistrust of his tenderness; but she dreaded that, when hereafter disenchanted from the enthusiasm of the moment, he might not only repent his generosity, but fancy that his measures had been instigated by preconcerted artifices of her own.

"He must not be allowed to hurry into so important a step!" was the result of her solitary musing. "A few haughty words from

his mother to an unprotected girl must not be the means of plunging my cousin into a measure from which there is no receding. If he really loves me, he will do honour to my motives. If he really loves me, he will not discard me from his affection on account of this voluntary exile from Hursley Park. We are both young. The feeling, if a genuine one, will strengthen with time; and some years hence, perhaps, when the differences between him and Frank are forgotten, and my brother has conquered an independence and secured me a respectable home, Harry may be induced to believe that I love him—love him for himself, and vouchsafe the only blessing necessary to complete my happiness.”

But while Miss Grenfell talked of blessings and dreamed of happiness, her fast-falling tears afforded evidence that there were storm and trouble to intervene ere she attained even the nearest of her expected havens. She was about to quit the house of which, during those five

important years which convert a child into a woman, she had been an inmate ; to quit it in sorrow,—to quit it in disgrace. She might never enter Hursley Park again. If the animosities between Frank and her cousin should prove irreconcilable, a perpetual division must take place in the family. She must behold the scenes of her girlish happiness no more ; must resign even the memory of her childish pleasures, her favourite spots, the garden she had cultivated, the trees planted by her hand, which, like herself, were springing up to maturity ; her favourite horse, the old eagle chained to its crag, which lifted up its wings exultingly on her approach ; and, above all, her village poor,—the indigent aged, whom she had soothed into a frame of resignation ; the indigent young, whom she was training to such habits as would render their old age competent and content. To leave these objects and these people without a farewell look, without a single kind word,—was it wonderful that even

the mild and moderate Bessy Grenfell should turn aside and weep at the thought?

Meanwhile, her brother's tenor of life in London was scarcely less disquieted. Nothing had been effected by his interviews with Jack Hartwell, save a promise that, should the settlement of public affairs prove propitious to his expectations, he would not disdain an olive-branch extended towards him, if by the personal and proper hand of his cousin. No letters from Bessy, no propositions from Hartwell or from any other person, would avail; but an unsuggested letter in the handwriting of Sir Henry must admit that he had wronged his kinsman.

"When independent in my circumstances," cried Frank, "I shall feel myself a different creature, and be able to give free course to natural impulses; at present it appears to me impossible ever to forget what has occurred. I cannot guess how I may feel then, actuated by happy motives, and in a situation to ac-

comply with my earnest desire of devoting my future life to my country, and achieving, not only distinction, but the consciousness of service zealously fulfilled. It is difficult to entertain a gloomy or unkind thought at such a moment of exultation."

"It would show more grace on your part if you entertained none now," was Hartwell's uncompromising reply. "Come! make a great gulp of it,—swallow your affronts, like a good fellow as you are; and let all be put straight for passing a pleasant Easter at Hursley, instead of the merry Christmas yours and Woodbridge's petulance has rendered so profoundly disagreeable! I bet five to one that, if you follow my advice, there will be two brides in Hampshire instead of one; and a Lady Woodbridge to do the honours of the place to Mrs. Grenfell!"

"Thanks! You have hit upon the only argument to confirm me in my obduracy and justify me to myself. And now, good-b'ye!"

I am engaged to a second breakfast with Sheridan, for which I am already five minutes past my appointment. ‘Punctuality is the soul of business,’ as poor Richard says; and on the eve of entering upon official life, I must not give too disparaging a sample of my merits. Shall we dine together?”

“I have some parish business at Doctors’ Commons that will keep me late. I must dine in the city.”

“Not a tithe cause, I trust?” demanded Grenfell with a smile.

“No! thank goodness, my parishioners and I live literally, as well as figuratively, in clover. If you were not five minutes after your time, I would edify you by enlarging upon the excellence of my glebe land and dairy. Another time.”

“To-morrow then, — here, and at the same hour?”

“No, my dear fellow; I am back to Hutsley by the early coach. I have promised Lady

Mary to preach for my father on Sunday ; and I must have to-morrow evening to brush up my sermon. Good-b'ye ! You won't give me better news to carry into Hampshire ?”

Grenfell nodded the adieu which plainly included a negative ; and in a moment was out of sight and hearing. His hands were full of business. After his breakfast with Sheridan, which included the discussion of political projects of the deepest moment, he had to go in search of Lord Waterton, who since his arrival in town had been unwearied in assiduities, invitations, and promises. It was now Frank's intention to accept for his sister the hospitalities so repeatedly offered. Grenfell was resolved that, if possible, she should not remain another day at Hursley Park. His family should undergo no further compromise in the eyes of the Woodbridges. If Sir Henry were really attached to Bessy, (and Frank admitted that the flimsy nature

of his cousin's sentiments rendered such a transition extremely probable,) it would be just as easy for him to tender his proposals at Lord Waterton's as elsewhere. There could be no cruelty in nipping a passion in the bud, which, according to Sir Henry's own account, was of little more than a month's duration ; for Frank felt convinced, from all he had ever noticed in his sister, that a man of uncultivated mind like her cousin had no more chance than Tom Hounslow of making a favourable impression.

Such was the origin of that urgent letter from the Earl, which, though enclosed in one from her brother, had appeared to Miss Grenfell so strangely timed. In the course of the day in which it reached her hand, she found occasion, however, to be thankful for the sanction and protection it afforded ; while in the sequel, as she was enabled to date from Sir William Beckford's house at Brighton her po-

lite excuses to the Watertons, no offence was given to the Earl, and no uneasiness to her brother.

She was careful, indeed, to afford not the slightest indication to him of the annoyances which had in the interim befallen her. There was no occasion to adduce any extraordinary motive for her excursion to Brighton; Sir William, having had occasion to visit Hampshire for a day or two, had prevailed upon Lady Mary to allow her to accompany him back to pass a few weeks with his daughters. They were friends, according to the acceptance of the term among girls of their age: there was another to require explanation in the affair, — for, as usual, Bessy's chief anxiety was to spare all pain to her brother. She would not for worlds have had Frank conjecture that she had been exposed to dishonouring accusations; that she had been driven from Hursley by the unkind usage of her aunt; or,

above all, that his feud with their cousin was the principal obstacle to her welfare,—the chief cause of her clearsightedness to the impossibility of her marriage with Sir Henry Woodbridge.

CHAPTER IX.

True majesty's the very soul of Kings,—
And rectitude's the soul of majesty.
If mining minions sap that rectitude,
The King may live, but majesty expires ;
And he that lessens majesty, impairs
The just obedience public good demands,—
Doubly a traitor to the crown and state.

YOUNG.

It is accounted an effort for persons of superior mind to bend their faculties to the nothingnesses of daily life, (as if Providence did not create in every soul a greater light to rule the day, and a lesser to rule the night,) but it is a far severer trial for people of sensibility to bend their feelings into contact with the heartless and the vain.

Among the minor plagues of life, for instance, none is more painful than to bear a deep and poignant distress into the centre of a circle of triflers ; to quit a house agitated by deep emotions, for one bewildered by frivolity and noise. During Papa's absence the Beckford girls had contrived to attract around them as gay a set of acquaintance as were to be brought together without the aid of the power which has been known to set sticks and stones in motion. The gay Tenth, with its sabres and sabretaches, was at their feet ; and Mary's headaches were already giving way under the influence of Scotch reels, naturalized at Brighton by Tom Hounslow, Lord Marytown, and Co., to the great detriment of the paper walls and pasteboard floors of that favourite watering-place.

After all that Sir William had announced to his fair charge on the road, of the delicate condition of his invalidery, he felt almost ashamed of the hearty laughs that saluted their ears

as they ascended the creaking stairs to the drawing-room ; but as he truly loved his girls, and valued their good qualities beyond his own character for consistency, he was sufficiently gratified that the visit which he announced to his family as “an unexpected pleasure” was welcomed as such ; and that, after his hint that he had invited Miss Grenfell to pass a few weeks with them, because he was afraid, poor girl ! she had a hard time of it with the old lady at home, they devoted all the powers of their good-nature to render her stay at Brighton as agreeable as possible.

Unfortunately, Bessy Grenfell’s notions of the agreeable were not those of the Miss Beckfords. Had they been at liberty to follow their own devices, their civilities to their young friend would have expanded into catches and glees, overtures and symphonies ; but, as Sir William’s inflexible decree prevented the smallest scrap of a cavatina from being audible in the house after midday, the girls were obliged

to adopt some quieter mode of entertainment. They persuaded Lady Beckford accordingly, that it would be an act of charity towards a damsel who was shut up at Hursley Park nine months of the year, to favour her with a double allowance of reels and strathspeys. Tom Hounslow, Lord Marytown, and Captain Wexford were at the house every evening; and though their respect towards the tall, grave sister of their friend Frank, and cousin of their friend Sir Henry, prevented them from being quite so uproarious as usual, they contrived to make her retire to bed every night with a headache far severer than those which were sending Mary Beckford to undergo a season's doctoring and dissipation in town.

She saw, however, that the Beckford girls intended to be very kind; that they were willing to afford her a share of their beaux and flirtations; and as she was only required in return to listen for an hour or two a day from each of them, to their murmurs against pa-

rental tyranny,—the misery of losing the support of so splendid a *tenore* as Radicati, and the anguish of apprehending that Papa would no longer afford them an opera-box, (though the Catalani was to appear in four new characters in the course of the season,) she resigned herself to her fate. The persecution was far more supportable than those she was in the habit of undergoing from Lady Mary! There were no bitter innuendoes to fear,—no cutting remarks,—no covert sneers. The kind, good-humoured people with whom she was associating had no object in life but to render themselves and others as happy as they could.

Her chief comfort consisted in obtaining indirect news from Hampshire, not only through Sir William Beckford, but from one of the young Danstons, who had just arrived at Brighton; by his habits there plainly showing that his business was to see those hourly in Sussex, of whom he had contrived to obtain

a sight daily in Hampshire. By him Bessy was apprised of Sir Henry Woodbridge's departure for Leicestershire with Jack Hartwell, who had returned from town on the very day of her quitting Hursley; and this was comfortable news! Hartwell was the sincere friend of her brother and cousin. Hartwell would suggest nothing to either that was not thoroughly kind and honourable; and though she had reason to fear, from the shortness of his visit to London, that he had effected little change in the sentiments and resolutions of Frank, she rejoiced that he should have been at hand to advise and comfort Sir Henry at the moment of her own departure.

"Only think how pleasant it must be!" whispered Sylvia Beckford, interrupting the reverie into which Miss Grenfell had fallen on obtaining this intelligence concerning her cousin's movements; "Captain Wexford says that any officer in his regiment may have the use of the band for an evening party; and that

the ladies of those who are married take such pains to supply them with all the new music ! After all, there is nothing so inspiriting as a military band ! Mary, do you think Papa would be angry if we were to copy out for Captain Wexford that splendid march of Steibelt's, which Tom Rodney sent us over from Russia ?”

“ If you are ever charitable enough to copy or give away music,” interposed young Danston, who was waiting the death of a great-uncle, eighty years of age, for the family living of Danston, “ pray take pity upon our village band, which has the greatest capabilities, but, from the want of young ladies in our family, receives no assistance or encouragement. I have been trying to persuade my pretty sister-in-law, Mrs. Henry, to undertake our organ-loft and singing-gallery ; but her health is delicate, and my brother will not hear of it.”

“ Dear ! it must be so very amusing to

have a village band to get into training!" exclaimed Selina. "The organist at Swansborough is too pragmatical to be interfered with, or I often longed to bring things a little into order there. Have you tolerable music at Hursley, Miss Grenfell? I don't think I ever was in Hursley church."

"We have fortunately no attempt at music, which would probably be bad. Poor old Dr. Hartwell is almost superannuated: but Lady Mary and Sir Henry make it a rule never to interfere with him, as he has an efficient curate for the discharge of his more material duties. Dr. Hartwell was a school friend, you know, of the late Sir Gideon."

"That accounts for his son having accepted such an office as tutor to Sir Henry," said Mary Beckford, with a blush that confirmed certain suspicions long entertained by Miss Grenfell. "Really, John Hartwell was too young and too agreeable to be made a tutor of."

"He is a very excellent person," was her reply, "and much beloved by those who were under his care. There is no person to whom my brother is more sincerely attached."

And involuntarily Bessy sighed to think how likely it was that one of her fair companions would be happily settled so near to home as Danston, and another so near to Danston as Hursley Rectory; while the third was anticipating, in the cymbals and kettle-drums of his Majesty's Guards, all the domestic felicity which Captain Wexford, who was desperately in love, could offer to her acceptance. The unambitious destinies of the three daughters of Sir William Beckford were secure; it was only herself who, by venturing to love and be beloved beyond her degree, was doomed to repining and mortification.

The letter, meanwhile, remitted to her by young Danston "from their charming neighbour Miss Loveden," would have excited a smile on Bessy's countenance, could she have

been moved just then to smile at anything, or at any time at the foibles of a person so dear to her as Julia.

“Imagine my surprise, dearest,” wrote her future sister-in-law, “on learning that you had suddenly thrown off the leaden chains of Hursley Park, and escaped to Brighton with Sir William Beckford ! You did not select the most amusing *compagnon de voyage* in the world ; but I can well conceive that anything would be preferable to the society of Sir Henry Woodbridge, — always the greatest bore on earth, and not improved I suppose, just now, by wearing the willow. My sole regret, indeed, for the disappointment my hard-heartedness seems to have inflicted on the young gentleman, arises from the notion of my dear Bessy’s being overpowered as the confidante of his tender distresses. Nevertheless, under his good pleasure and Frank’s, poor Woodbridge’s resentment is quite unjustifiable ; for, *foi de Julie Loveden*, I never gave the smallest

encouragement to his passion. I shall feel a very cousinly sorrow of course, if I hear of his drowning himself in the Hursley horsepond, *mais j'en aurai la conscience nette !*

“ Meanwhile, dearest, saving my loss of your occasional society, I am passing my days happily enough in the lap of the most comfortable of all nurses—Hope. I hear of nothing from my uncle but Frank’s favour with the Prince; nothing from Frank but the brilliant prospects of his friends; everything looks bright and shining! Lady Mary never makes her appearance here; and as it was only this morning we discovered from old Dr. Hartwell that Sir Henry had taken himself off to Leicestershire with ‘glorious John,’ as your brother calls him, we have studiously kept away from Hursley Park. Having now however turned the sharp corner into February, these perplexities of ours, dear Bessy, are almost at their term. The Regent’s speech will set more hearts at rest than are noted in the Gazette.

People hereabouts are of opinion that if Lord Grey should be premier, Sheridan will go to Ireland as secretary, in order to get him out of the way of a person with whom, it seems, he is not on the best of terms. In that case, nothing would of course be easier than for Frank to obtain his appointment in that country instead of London. What say you? Would it be wise for us to withdraw from the dangers and expenses of town, at the risk of being lost sight of by the Prince Regent? Think of all this, and answer me before the 3rd; the day on which I trust our destinies and those of the country will be decided.

“Your affectionate sister,

“JULIA.”

These were cheering declarations. Bessy felt more than satisfied with the account of Frank's prospects; with which, resenting her having declined the invitation he had been at so much pains to procure for her from Lord

Waterton, he had not chosen to favour her. Little suspecting the real motive of her withdrawal from Hursley Park, he fancied that she was visiting the Beckfords at Brighton, only that she might be nearer to Sir Henry Woodbridge, and at liberty to receive his visits.

Brighton rumours fully confirmed, meanwhile, the contents of Miss Loveden's letter. Brighton was inspired by a sort of inherent leaning towards the Whigs. It was under their influence over the Prince that the Pavilion had risen, and the town progressed to prosperity; and it was now ready to light up all its bonfires while announcing in every direction that, parliament was to be opened by royal commission, and that, on the evening of the same day, Lord Grey would assume the functions of premiership.

Had Miss Grenfell been still in free and unrestrained communication with her brother, she would have given no ear to these unauthorized generalities; for Frank Grenfell was

now aware that there would be no immediate change of Ministry. If Sheridan continued to be consulted by the Prince, it was as a private friend, and one of the ablest men in the country ; but without any purpose of adopting the measures of the Whig party in general. Their views, and more especially the peremptory mode in which they had been recently forced upon him, suited neither the Prince, his family, nor his friends. It was not worth while to sacrifice his popularity in the country for those who would sacrifice nothing in return ; they would not rid him of his wife, they would not rid him of his debts : in undertaking the charge of his Royal Highness's conscience, they had no thoughts of laying aside their own.

Perceiving how much his young friend's spirits were depressed by this defeat of Lord Grey's party and politics, Sheridan kept whispering to him, as Falstaff to Shallow, "Do not grieve at this. Look you, we shall be sent

for in private. He must seem thus to the world. Fear not your advancement! I am the man yet that shall make you great!" But Grenfell was beginning to reply like the justice, "I cannot perceive how!" and to feel that his prospects of preferment were for the present at an end.

Lord Raynham, who, luckily for Frank, had been confined by a violent fit of the gout at the Lodge during the last fortnight of incertitude preceding the re-opening of parliament, proved more persuadable. Satisfied, from the grumblings of Lord Teviot and others of his colleagues, that the mere fact of the Regent having sent for Lord Grey in the first instance to concoct his speech, ought to be taken as an indication of his Royal Highness's views to be fulfilled so soon as the removal of the restrictions rendered him really master of the throne, he was careful to remain on the best footing with one whose good fortune, though deferred, was certain. So long as the Regent, regarding

himself as mere *locum tenens* for his father, thought it right to defer to that father's well-known partialities, it was not possible for him to cede to the influence of his own diametrically opposite opinions. But, should the King's illness be confirmed at the end of the year as incurable, all would come to pass which had been too sanguinely anticipated as immediate. There was no occasion at present to break off the engagement between Grenfell and Miss Loveden. — They were young. Julia might wait till the end of the year without injury or regret.

Poor Frank groaned with dismay on receiving the letter to this effect, which, apparently, ought to have been pressed with rapture to his heart. To his eyes, his position stood in a very different light from that in which it was viewed by Lord Raynham. He knew that he had not been ingenuous; that he had not revealed to Miss Loveden's family the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

He had said not a word of his rupture with the Woodbridges; had alluded very slightly to his debts, and not at all to his difficulties; all of which would become apparent in the course of the year, and consign poor Julia to misery and himself to disgrace. Inextricably involved, what was to become of him? Ought he not in honour even now to place the exact state of the case before Miss Loveden's family; leaving it to their mercy to sanction the continuance of the engagement till his public prospects were placed in an unquestionable point of view? Alas! it was so much easier, after Lord Raynham's unsought declarations, to allow things to remain in their present uncertainty,—so much less painful to depend upon the generosity of his Julia's attachment. It was convenient, in short, to do wrong; and the usual result of doing wrong followed,—that the advantages derived from the act forfeited half their attraction in his eyes. He grew discontented with himself,—

with Julia, — with the Raynhams, — with the world !

People, who in the midst of affluence delight to moralize upon the vanity of riches,—people who, with narrow philosophy, affect to hold themselves superior to the value of money,—must surely consider that the only purpose of opulence is to supply the pomps and fineries of social life.

Without a care or golden wish
To look upon our beechen bowl and dish,

is, however, one of the smallest efforts of the abiders in “ life’s low vale ! ” Any man may exclaim with the stoic, in gazing upon the lavish luxuries of wealth, “ How many things of which I do not stand in need ! ”

But there are sacrifices exacted of needy men of a far bitterer and more urgent nature : to renounce the power of doing good, — to close their eyes against opportunities of obliging, — to check every generous impulse, — to lose sight of just claims, — to harden the con-

science against a thousand minor commandments of equity and honour ! Had Grenfell been possessed, not of affluence, but of competence, he would have spared himself the anguish of living in a false position towards a family from whom (though certain that their dealings with regard to himself were prompted by the hollowest motives) he ought to have had no concealments or reserve. Had he been independent, he would have gloried in devoting his services to the Prince, without personal consideration, but as a man and a friend ; and to the country, as the object of his pride and veneration. As it was, he was obliged to temporize, — to be cautious, — to make the exercise of his talents and patriotism a marketable commodity ! It is true that Lord Warkworth, the heir of forty thousand per annum, was guilty of the same meanness : but there was honour and ability in the head and heart of Grenfell to have furnished a wilderness of Warkworths.

The blight called into existence, in the first instance, by his thoughtless college extravagance, was now falling upon the destinies of Francis Grenfell. The mortified man was atoning the follies of the prodigal boy. When he should have paid back the obligations incurred for him by his cousin, scarcely a guinea would remain to him ! His present task was to reap the whirlwind of which his own hands had sown the germ ! Already the foot of the young aspirant for public distinction was upon the first step of that fatal inclined plane, which has precipitated into an abyss so many a man of genius, destined by Nature to adorn the Temple of Glory. In commencing his still brief London career, he had regarded as a warning the ruined fortunes of his father. Alas ! he was now rushing into the still more harassing and ruinous entanglements of a Sheridan ! Though aware that, in the instance of that illustrious friend, a man of the highest intelligence, the nicest

honour, the most delicate sensibility, was degraded into a political intrigant, and driven to the most paltry expedients, Frank Grenfell, like Richard Brinsley, was tempted to embarrass his onset with the burthen of an unportioned wife,—to devote the best feelings of his heart to a royal personage, about as sensible to the homage as the statue of Moloch to the cry of the infants sacrificed on its shrine,—and to become at best a parliamentary jobber, uplifting his voice as the hireling of a party. Many rash sacrifices are recorded by sacred and profane history for the compassion of posterity ; but let those who delight to grieve with Agamemnon, or relent with Jephthah, sometimes vouchsafe their pity to the pure-minded youth or high-minded man of their own times, compelled to self-sacrifice through the gnawing consequences of follies engendered by the corruptions of a disordered state of society !

Frank Grenfell resolved to deliberate for a

few days upon the course to be pursued towards the Raynham's. "*Château qui parle et femme qui écoute va se rendre,*" saith the proverb. The man who deliberates upon a point of honesty and honour, is in equal danger of ceding to his secret weakness.

CHAPTER X.

All thy vexations
Were but my trials of thy love, and thou
Hast strangely stood the test. Here, before Heaven,
Both as my gift and thine own acquisition,
Worthily purchas'd, take my daughter !

SHAKSPEARE.

BLESSED are the mortals never waked be-
times on their pillow by the pricking of their
crown of thorns to examine and re-examine
their distresses, while awaiting the rising of
that sun which shines so much more auspi-
ciously upon their fellow-creatures !

Such, on the day when Perceval kissed
hands as Tory minister of state to the Whig
Regent, who, in his letter confirming the pre-
miership, expressly stated himself to sacrifice

in the appointment his own principles and inclinations to a sense of consideration for those of his afflicted father, — such was the position of young Grenfell.

No longer blinded by self-delusion or the delusions of Sheridan, he saw in the clearest light that his political dreams were a farce ; that by his refusal of a place in the household he had alienated the regard of the Regent ; that he had overdrawn his account at his banker's, — overengaged his property in the Funds ; that his table was covered with unpaid bills, and his heart with the scars and festering of despair. There was but one word for it all, — RUIN ! — that comprehensive climax of so many a human destiny. Young, beloved, handsome, healthy, happy, — the brilliant stage was about to sink, and precipitate the well-graced actor into the wretched chaos of filthy machinery below : when, lo ! just as he had risen, and dressed himself for the more convenient examination of so pleasant a

prospect, a letter was placed in his hands, — an odd-looking letter superscribed in an odd-looking handwriting,—which, with the instinct of an embarrassed man, he instantly conjectured to be a dun, and placed under the marble paper-weight upon his writing-table. He had not courage to confront, at such a moment, a demand which, however trifling, it was impossible to satisfy. Though only a single drop in his cup of bitterness, it might cause the wormwood to overflow.

It was much easier to tear open the envelope of one from his beloved Julia, which, having been addressed to him under cover to Mr. Sheridan, was brought in half an hour later. But there was no comfort in the perusal: the confiding tone of love and joy in which he was addressed by Miss Loveden, cut him to the soul. What could she mean by her congratulations on their happy change of prospects? Was Lord Raynham, because a fortnight confined to his gouty chair, so completely in the

basket as well as the cradle, as to fancy that regents, like their parasites, are blown hither and thither by every wind of doctrine? — or that a sovereign could compliment away the government patronage of the country both to the right and left, like haunches of the bucks and does from the royal domain?

Ere he reached the conclusion of his gentle Julia's epistle, however, his amazement was to increase. "My father's letter," said she, "must by this time have set your mind fully at ease; and, believe me, the intelligence it conveyed was as surprising to me as it, doubtless, proved to yourself. I have, of course, obeyed his injunctions to keep the contents a secret from the rest of the family; and you are consequently to appear to the world, as you have ever done to me, rich to the utmost necessity of our modest station."

The astonishment of Frank knew no bounds: — "Her father's letter! — what letter?" — he had almost added, "What father?" — for, saving

occasional glimpses of Dr. Loveden's buzz-wig in former years at Raynham Lodge, and one short visit of respect which, since his engagement, Julia had insisted upon his paying to the Rectory, he knew as little of Miss Loveden's sire as of his own. During the four-and-twenty hours spent in the old gentleman's company on his last expedition into Hampshire, he had discovered in him only what the world calls a good kind of man; a man punctual in his payments, — liberal in his housekeeping; dignified with his churchwardens, — cringing to Lord Raynham; devoted to church and state, because the one supplied him with five per cent. for his money, and the other, with fifteen hundred a-year for the discharge of his clerical duties.

An old gentleman of this square-toe class was not likely to excite any very lively degree of affection on the part of a high-spirited young fellow like Grenfell; but, aware that Julia entertained a strong sense of filial grati-

tude and affection, he was prepared to be respectful and attentive to a gentlemanly old man, whose only fault consisted in spending his income, and deferring somewhat too largely to the right honourable brother-in-law who undertook the disposal of his girls. To expect any outbreak of generosity from such a person would have been requiring figs from thistles. Julia had from the first acquainted him that her portion was to be as limited as those of her sisters, and he expected no more.

The object, therefore, of Miss Loveden's raptures on the present occasion, it was impossible to conjecture : he proceeded, therefore, with all despatch to withdraw from beneath the paper-weight the clumsy letter superscribed with pale ink, in a cramped, eccentric, Italian-looking hand, which he now nothing doubted to be that of the Reverend Julius Loveden, without much expectation of being rewarded for the effort : what, therefore, was his amazement at the following extraordinary communication?

“ D^r SIR, Hartshill Recty, Feb. y^e 6, 1811.

“ I take up my pen to advise you that, having deliberately consider'd y^e peculiar circumstances relating to y^r engagem^t with my d^r daugh^r Julia, I am happy to have it in my power to obviate further delays to y^r union. Trusting to y^r future efforts in y^r professⁿ, to place my girl eventually in a conditⁿ of life such as, by God's blessing, she has hitherto enjoy'd, I have instructed my sol^s, Mess^{rs} Closewax and Fibbs, of Pump Court, Temple, to invest in y^r joint names (by virtue of a deed of trust to be duly execut^d by y^rself and such trustees as may be agreed on betwixt us) a net sum of twenty thousand pounds ster^g, in addition to the five thousand to which, by virtue of her mother's marriage settle^t, Miss Julia Loveden is entit^d; the same to be appropriated to your mutual mainten^{ce}, comfort, and convenience, and bound by y^e usual clauses of limitatⁿ: on express condition, always, that y^e said free gift and benefaction

to my d^r daugh^r shall remain a strict secret between us, whereby to secure me from importunities on y^e part of my two sons-in-law, S^r William Rowe and the Dean. These conditions being duly fulfill'd on y^r part, I further add on mine, that I trust no time will be lost to enable me to sign myself, d^r sir,

“ Y^r affec^t fath^r,

“ JULIUS LOVEDEN.

“ *Postscriptum.* — I have p^d to y^r credit at y^e house of my s^d sol^s (Mess^{rs} Closewax and Fibbs) a sum of one thousand pounds, w^h I beg you to accept as a token of regard, for y^r private occasions and marr^e outfit.”

A thunderbolt falling at the feet of Grenfell could not have more astonished him! Was this credible? Was he not the dupe of his own senses, or of the hoaxing of some facetious friend? But yet, though Dr. Loveden's handwriting was unknown to him, “y^e epistle” bore the Winchester post-mark. Julia's letter

of confirmation, moreover, was unquestionably authentic. Julia would not sport with his anxieties ! Julia would not make a mockery of his affection !

To attempt to assign motives for the measures of an eccentric old gentleman, buried for the last thirty years in a secluded Hampshire parsonage, was an endless task : Julia might be his favourite child ; the Dean and the Judge might be sons-in-law less to the Doctor's liking than himself ; or he might anticipate an eventual repayment to his child and grandchildren, of his present liberality. It was plain he considered that Mr. Grenfell's disposition would render his " d'r daugh'r " happy ; he probably trusted that Mr. Grenfell's talents and exertions would make her rich !

No matter ! Frank was the happiest of men ! To fly with all the crablike speed of a hackney-coach to Pump Court, Temple, and ascertain whether Messrs. Closewax and Fibbs, sol's, were actually in possession of Dr. Loveden's instruc-

tions, was all he could do on the spur of the moment to subdue the restlessness of his emotions.

Messrs. Closewax and Fibbs were unluckily closeted with a rich prosy client, as is usually the case when some poor wretch is waiting a lawyer's pleasure to the prolongation of his own pain; and though a seedy clerk in tops and corduroys smirked in with the apologies of his employers, and a newspaper containing an account of the ceremonial of the Regent's investment of office and swearing in before the Privy Council, Frank could not a moment fix his attention upon details of "Gold Stick or Silver Stick, Chamberlains and Stewards of the household (with their respective wands), Archbishops, Chancellors, or Ministers of State." Colonels Bloomfield and Macmahon, at other moments the objects of his respect and regard, were no more to him now than the "massive Queen's Anne's inkstand," in which the Regent was stated by the reporters to have gracefully dipped his pen. His heart was not with the

Privy Council, not with the Regent, not with Whig, Tory, or Radical; but kept vibrating between the writers, young and old, of the two letters which on that blessed morning had brought peace and happiness to his heart.

The prosy client having at length shuffled off, with a sufficiency of few last words at the door, and a facetious and cackling allusion to his clogs and umbrella, which almost tempted Frank to rush forward and thrust him out, Mr. Closewax came smiling into the room, rubbing his thin blue hands at the notion of the item added to a long account by the long visitation of the last customer. The caution with which (upon Frank's production of Dr. Loveden's letter as evidence of his identity,) the sol^r of the Rev^d Dr. admitted that they were in possession of a power of attorney enabling them to transfer to the young gentleman's immediate use one thousand pounds sterling,—and a letter of instructions to confer with him touching a nomination of trustees and draft of settlements,

was almost necessary to convince Frank that all was real, and that the happiness showered upon him was not the unsubstantial mockery of a dream, but a matter to be "dealt with by attorneyship."

All that seemed at present necessary was to give his card of address to the Pump Court sol^r of Dr. Loveden. He was resolved not to stir further in the business, without a personal conference with the noble-minded old man who had so good a right to dictate the terms he might consider essential to his daughter's welfare. He would hurry down that evening by the mail, to pour forth his gratitude to his benefactor, and his adoration to her whom he only valued the more tenderly for having recently felt himself in honour bound to resign.

Acceptance of the fortune thus generously tendered could be no matter of deliberation. It had been more grateful to his feelings to have lavished benefits upon his Julia than to accept them from her family. But she was

well aware that he had wooed her on the supposition of her being entitled only to a narrow pittance. Mutually confident in each other's generosity, the property of one was that of both. For either to receive benefits from the hand of the other, was as taking from their own.

On returning homewards, therefore, from the Temple, poor Frank, an enfranchised slave, a captive released from bondage, seemed to tread on air. He was almost too happy. The narrow earth appeared too confined for his expanding soul; and his eyes turned fervently towards Heaven in heartfelt thankfulness for the mighty good of which his fellow-creatures were the instrument. The rich contentment of his heart seemed to lack objects on which to lavish its love and gratitude!

Such was the state of his feelings when on entering his lodgings he was informed that "a gentleman" was waiting for him in the drawing-room. "A gentleman" indicated some person not in the habit of frequenting his house;

and already a presentiment of Dr. Loveden in his buzz-wig caused his heart to beat, and his deportment to reform itself to gravity and respect. On entering the room, however, it was a real comfort to see Jack Hartwell's round shoulders cowering familiarly over the fire, as he sat devouring the charming pages of Mrs. Tighe's *Psyche*, the damp boards of which kept warping most sympathetically towards the grate.

"Hartwell, my dear Hartwell!" cried Frank, inflicting upon him one of those cordial slaps on the back by which one man expresses the weight of his regard to another, "you are the very soul I could have wished to see at this moment!"

"Soul, indeed! You give a strange welcome to my body!" cried Jack, good-humouredly rubbing his shoulders. "Another time, show your civility by somewhat less smart a whack. You're in plaguy high spirits this morning, my fine fellow, considering that Per-

ceval and the Tories have been just reseated,—and, like his Royal Highness the Regent,—long to reign over us.”

“D— the Tories!” cried Frank, much as Robin Roughhead “domns dumplings” in the play.

“With all my heart! But what puts you in such merry cue? I came to condole with you.”

“Congratulate me rather, my dear friend, as the happiest dog in his Majesty and the Regent’s three kingdoms! My marriage is settled, Jack; finally settled! Within a month I shall be the husband of Julia Loveden!”

“Very likely: and, within a year, the husband of a repining wife, and father of a starving child!”

“No such thing!—the husband of a woman enjoying all the comforts of life; and exerting myself, by sober industry in my profession, to endow her hereafter with its luxuries.”

“ ‘ Sir John, thy tender lambkin now is King ;
Harry the Fifth ’s the man’—

eh ! Frank ? ”

“ No, my dear Hartwell ; farewell the certain fooleries and uncertain friendships of a court ! Chancery, Chancery’s the one to which henceforward I pledge my devotion ! ”

“ Including an occasional flirtation with the Rolls, I suppose ! Well, this is the best news I have heard this many a day ! But how have these miracles been brought about ? Has your friend Sherry, in rehearsing a new pantomime, given you a stroke on the shoulder with Harlequin’s bat ? He understands taps on the shoulder by this time, I suppose ;—and so apparently do you ! ” continued Jack, again applying his hand to his own.

“ Don’t ask me for explanations ; they are the only things I could find it in my heart to refuse you at this moment. But I am pledged to keep my secret.”

“As you please,” said Hartwell with a smile. “I dare say I could lay hold of it, if I chose to condescend to Chancery practice, and either browbeat or bewilder. But I will have mercy, and desist from cross-examination.”

“Thanks! for, as I said before, when a fellow’s heart is overflowing with undeserved love and joy, it is next to impossible to say ‘nay.’”

“The deuce it is! Then put on your hat again, (which you have flung as unceremoniously on the sofa, as if you had ten thousand a year to spend with Artis or André,) and come with me to Nerot’s Hotel!”

Frank instantly drew back.

“What!—deny me pretty nearly the only favour I ever asked you,—and on the happiest day of your life?”

“You should not have asked it! You are well aware that it is impossible for me to meet Sir Henry.”

“In the first place, what have I said about meeting Sir Henry? You need not look so stately! I shall have you writing me a protest, Grey and Grenville fashion, against submitting your conduct to the judgment of ‘another person,’ instead of remaining contented with my Royal Highness’s better judgment.”

“Laugh as much as you choose. But I see clearly that your object is to decoy me into an interview with my cousin.”

“You don’t see clearly,—which for a man so much in love is not to be wondered at,—or you might know that I should scorn to decoy you into anything, even the acceptance of the premiership, if it were still to be had. But I would not give a fig for you, Frank, if, without any decoying, you do not hasten with me to Nerot’s, and of your own free will and accord stretch out your hand to one who has been a brother to you, and say, ‘By-gones are by-gones!—let us be friends again!’ You pro-

mised me as much when we talked the matter over three weeks ago."

" I promised you that, if my prospects in public life"—

" Come, come, — no dirty quibbling about terms. Equivocation is not, or ought not to be, in your code. Remember you have to practise in a court of equity. You must look to the spirit, not to the letter, of your engagements. If an independence were secured to you, so as to place you above all necessity for further obligations to Sir Henry Woodbridge, you were to do your part towards a renewal of friendship. It is secured. You won't tell me how; but you assure me that you are rich, or rich to be. Now is the time, or never, to say ' Harry Woodbridge, give me your hand !' "

Frank did not reply. He was taking up his hat.

" That's right !" cried Hartwell, involuntarily retaliating upon his young friend the

slap upon the back he had so lately resented :

“ I don’t ask you where you are going ! ”

“ To Nerot’s ! ”

“ Of course ! I wouldn’t have owned you for a disciple, had there been another minute’s hesitation.”

CHAPTER XI.

I survive
To mock the expectation of the world,
To frustrate prophecies, and to raze out
Rotten opinion which hath writ me down
After my seeming. The tide of blood in me
Hath proudly flow'd in vanity till now ;
When it doth turn and ebb back to the sea,
To mingle henceforth with the state of floods
And flow with even current.

SHAKSPEARE.

GRENFELL contented himself with writing that day by the post to Julia and her father, announcing his visit to the Rectory for the following day, — expatiating into raptures of love, gratitude, expectation, and resolution, which afforded a poor promise for the future perspicuity and condensation of his legal style.

It was impossible to refuse that one evening to his cousin. They must dine together, — they must cement their re-union by dipping together in the dish.

A glad man was John Hartwell as he sat between his two young friends. While listening to the warm outpourings of Frank Grenfell's genial spirit, he was far more inclined to exclaim, "*I taught the boy!*" than he had ever expected to be in cheering his maiden speech. The effusion of an excellent nature was perceptible in every word he uttered. It was impossible for one who loved him not to thank God that such a brand had been snatched from the fire; or not to pray that his future destiny might lie apart from temptations which it had been seen he was not sufficiently stern of purpose to resist.

There had been no direct allusion between the cousins to offences given or taken: they had rushed towards each other as they might have done twenty years before; and a "Frank!"

—“ Harry !” spoken with clasped hands and brimming eyes, expressed all that it was necessary should be understood between them.

Never was there a more cheerful dinner than that which reunited the three friends. Frank Grenfell bore with the greatest good-humour a roasting from Hartwell on the defeat of his political friends.

“ Woodbridge has been hunting with me this fortnight past down at my den,” said he, “ and will tell you, that the discomfiture of the Whigs had cast its shadow before, — even so far as Leicestershire. The rumour reached us just as we set off for town ; and the country had no thoughts of donning its hatband and weepers. We, Church-establishment men, are in no hurry for you to let the Catholics out of pound, to graze upon our hedges : and even yonder borough-holder there, who pretends that he is about to take bounty of your party, don’t want to find Dronington disfranchised and Swansborough

thrown open, till his own time is up. We both agreed, as we drove into town this morning, that, having vainly tried all other expedients and systems, a Regent, or half-sovereign, with a Tory ministry and Whig advisers, may perhaps help us to cash payments and the evacuation of the Peninsula."

"Wait till the removal of the restriction, and you will hear news of us," cried Frank playfully.

"I don't want to hear news of you," replied Jack. "As to yourself, ten years is the shortest possible period at which I can allow you to aspire to a seat in the House."

"And then, if rotten boroughs still exist, I promise him one of mine," observed Sir Henry: "which till then, my dear Jack, I hope I have your permission to keep warm."

"Yes, you will make as respectable and conscientious a county member as another," said Hartwell, looking affectionately at the one of his two pupils who was most valued,

though least beloved : “ you will take care of the Corn Laws for us, and prevent turnpike-roads being cut across the lawn of Hursley Park.”

“ Or the glebe of Hursley Rectory.”

“ On the contrary, I am ready to petition for a cut of the Great Western road, to raise the price of produce. We, farmer-parsons, look chiefly to the interests of our hay and corn. Meanwhile, it strikes me, Woodbridge, that there is still a little topic you have left untouched on with your cousin : perhaps, considering that you discussed it with me yesterday for the space of a hundred and four miles, you fancy you have worn it threadbare, eh ?”

“ Hartwell !”

“ Not at all, my dear fellow ! I am convinced that, were you to begin again, you would be more eloquent than ever. So, cheer up ! and throw off ! Come,—Frank has shown you a good example ! You are not the only young man in England dying to make your-

self *unasy* in the thralldom of wedlock. Don't you see that your cousin is on tenterhooks to learn the name of your Ally Croker !"

"Hartwell ! Hartwell !" remonstrated Grenfell in his turn : but Jack had now effected all that he desired. The ice was broken ; and nothing appeared easier to Sir Henry than to acknowledge to his cousin that the heart which in November he had wanted to devote to Julia Loveden, had been in February placed at the disposal of Bessy Grenfell : all he asked was, Frank's sanction to the renewal of his suit. He did not choose to proceed to Brighton, and force himself into the society of the Beckfords, unless expressly recommended by Grenfell to the favourable attention of his sister.

"There's a modest young gentleman for you !" cried the incorrigible Hartwell. "After living nearly five years in habits of intimacy with Miss Grenfell, with every opportunity afforded him of making a favourable impression, he can't 'tie his cravat without the war-

rant of Mister Justice Overdo:’ he must have a letter of recommendation, like Sir Harry Wildair from gentle Mr. Vizard, for ‘ permission to court my cousin.’ ”

“ I swear, Hartwell, you are deeper read in profane stage-plays than even my friend Sherry ! ” cried Frank, willing to divert attention from Sir Henry’s confusion. “ What would your bishop say, reverend sir, if he were to hear you talk so rakishly ? ”

“ His lordship would say, that much learning (of the British Theatre) did make me mad: but, since John Home’s time, no black coat has been persecuted for philo-dramatism: — there’s a word for you, my boy, at which Dr. Johnson would have thrown the quarto copy of his own Dictionary! But methinks we are straying from Brighton. Will you give this poor youth a character to your sister, Frank? — Ay or no ? ”

“ No, then; for I am persuaded he is in need of none.”

"When it is only three weeks since Miss Grenfell refused him point-blank, in presence of two or more credible witnesses !"

"My sister refuse your hand !" cried Frank in utter surprise.

"In presence of Sir William Beckford, Bessy fancied it her duty to evince her participation in the animosities of her captious brother," replied Sir Henry reproachfully.

"And, under the circumstances of my resentment and refractoriness, you actually made her an offer of your hand ?" persisted Grenfell.

"A rash act, I admit, and one that met with a deserved rebuke ; but at that moment it was my fate to see her so unhandsomely treated by my mother, and to hear her so groundlessly vilified by the old ouran-outang Sir Robert Crewe, that the only mode of marking dissent was by giving free course to my feelings."

"And Bessy had the courage to refuse you ? She has a harder heart than I suspected."

“Come, come!—reflect, my dear fellow, upon your own impracticability, when assailed on every side by Woodbridge, your sister, and myself!” exclaimed Hartwell. “For my part, Frank, I was beginning to look upon you as the most buffalo-skinned brute on earth,—a stoic of the woods, a man without a tear, when I saw you hold out so sternly.”

“Don’t remind a penitent sinner of his offences,” cried Grenfell, covering his face with his hands. “Pharaoh’s heart was hardened for a time,—but it is all milk and honey now; and so shall Bessy’s be, or she is no sister of mine. But still there recurs the old drawback,—what will Lady Mary say? and how are we to surmount the difficulty of my sister’s want of fortune?”

“Fiddle-de-dee!” was Hartwell’s peevish rejoinder; “there is such a thing as false pride, Francis Grenfell. Attached as you are to your sister, you ought rather to feel that she is a match for an emperor.”

“ I do. My hesitation regards the feelings of Lady Mary.”

“ ‘ What will Mrs. Grundy say ? ’ again. Rely upon it, her ladyship’s indignation has exhausted itself by this time. Old Crewe and his wife have been sponging this week past at Hursley Park, and they have doubtless talked the matter dry.”

“ Do my mother at least the justice to remember,” interposed Woodbridge gravely, “ that fortune never made part of her stipulations for her son. On the contrary, she always suggested that Miss Loveden’s five thousand pounds ought to be given up to her sisters, as being in less affluent circumstances.”

“ A redeeming point, I admit ; and I honour Lady Mary for the notion,” cried Hartwell. “ In that suggestion spake not the blood of Maclaren, and nothing Scotie ! ”

“ I won’t have you abuse my relations,” remonstrated Woodbridge good-humouredly.

“ Frank is the only one of the family concerning whom I allow you to have your say ; and I am not sure that I may not take even *his* part against you, should I live to become his brother-in-law.”

Thus affectionately addressed, it was of course impossible for Grenfell to persist in declining to furnish his cousin with a letter to Bessy, expressive of his utmost approval of a suit that would place her in a situation of honour and comfort, and render her happiness dependent upon the man dearest to him on earth.

On the following day Sir Henry Woodbridge was to set off for Brighton, and Frank for Hartshill Rectory ; and the Baronet, with his usual disinclination to be alone, undertook to persuade Hartwell that a little sea-air would be an immense advantage to his health, and that he could not do better than spend a fortnight with him at the Old Ship.

“And, pray, to repeat the question just now so saucily asked by Mr. Francis, what do you think my bishop will say to my Quixotizing about the country week after week, as sense-keeper to two mad boys, who, because they have lost their hearts, can’t keep their heads from running against a stone wall?” cried Hartwell. “I shall be having an Ebenezer chapel set up under my nose, as a just reproof for neglecting my duties; whereas at present my parish is noted in the county as wholly free from two prevailing nuisances,—dissensions and dissenters.”

“Your province is certainly a peaceful one,” observed Sir Henry. “The Regent would give something to have his sceptre extended over as much harmony as lies under your worship’s pastoral staff.”

“My primary doctrine is comprehended in what I call the eleventh and twelfth commandments,” replied John Hartwell with feeling,—

“ the two enforced by the Christian dispensation, on which hang all the law and the prophets ; and my parishioners, God be thanked ! make their first application of the duty, to love their neighbours as themselves, to their unworthy pastor. Not one of my flock but would go through fire and water to serve me !”

“ Happy the parish priest who has such first-fruits at command !” replied Sir Henry, who was apprised by ocular demonstration of the accuracy of Hartwell’s vaunt.

“ They even allow me (without scandal) my gallop after the hounds, as an exercise good for my bodily health and digestion,” said John cheerfully. “ As I don’t allow my pleasures to interfere with my duties, and as I am ever ready at their call, and prepared, without it, to afford them orthodox divinity and the spiritual comfort of which they stand in need, they don’t care to find fault with my pleasure.

Perhaps, if the truth were known, they love me a bit the better for this said frailty of sportsmanship. Beholding me an erring man, they are happier to struggle on with me to a better frame of mind, than to receive the dictations of a more ascetic instructor. Thus indulged, however, I must not quit them again so soon to follow my own devices. Favour me only, my dear boys, with daily accounts of yourselves, for which you may get franks, or for which I find pence. And don't forget, Woodbridge, when you have any communication with Hursley, to inquire how the pup is getting on. Had I known how soon you were to leave home and go woolgathering about the world, I should have been loath to part the poor beast from its mother; but I believe Smith is a careful fellow."

There was but one drawback to the delight with which, on the day following this happy meeting, Grenfell found himself on the road

into Hampshire. A hurried interview with Sheridan had apprised him of the discontents excited in the Whig party by the discovery or suspicion of the manœuvres which had defeated them at Carlton House. The account of his share in the transaction, drawn up by Richard Brinsley, and promulgated to the party through the authorized medium of the living representative of Charles Fox, had been pronounced obscure, involved, and unsatisfactory. The statement was "approved by the Prince" as authentic, but disapproved by every one else. By his declaration that "it had occurred to him to make out the sketch of a speech," Sheridan seemed to wish the preparation of a state-paper to appear a thing of mere jest and fancy, like a wit's lampoon or schoolboy's exercise; the whole jet of his apology turning upon the use of the definite or indefinite article, "*a*" speech, or "*the*" speech; — even as that adroit apologist, Louis Philippe, has

since hedged out of a national engagement, by leaning the onus of his breach of faith on the substitution of "*UNE charte*," for "*LA charte*."

It is much pleasanter to that portion of the public calling itself the world (by way of proving that a part is not always less than the whole) to abuse a prince's parasite than a prince ; and if a simile may be repeated, already pressed into the service of these volumes, Sheridan had too long established himself "*Jamie's whipping-boy*" to the Prince of Wales, to have any right to resent receiving a cut or two, intended for the shoulders of the Regent. Though in private the obnoxious clauses of the address were attributed by his Royal Highness to Sheridan, and by Sheridan to his Royal Highness, society chose to denounce Richard Brinsley as the offender, and to point him out as the sunken rock against which the intended ministry had split, and

gone to pieces. Every creature who had anticipated place or pension, for himself, his friends, relations, or acquaintance, cried out aloud accordingly against the manœuvres of Sheridan. A buoy was placed over his head, as warning to the pilots of future administrations. "He had sacrificed his party,—he had sacrificed his country,—to a private pique against Lord Grey!" His party and the country had indeed a right to be resentful.

"I have only one comfort in all this!" cried Sherry, recklessly swallowing a deep potation of brandy which he had called for at Frank's lodgings ere he proceeded to the House. "The Prince exonerates me from all blame, and is indignant at the unfair suspicions to which I have been exposed. Now, his Royal Highness is even better aware than myself of the menaces held out by certain personages, that 'they would ride roughshod through Carlton House;' and because he chose to dislodge them from

the demi-pique of their high horse, previous to the attempt, it is hard indeed that I should be toasted for evermore, like the mole whose hill was the means of throwing off and killing King William, (of inglorious, but, alas ! immortal memory,) as the gentleman in black who had done such service to the country."

"I can conceive that you are little anxious to become a Tory toast," cried Frank ; " more especially as these people's unlooked-for success will cause them to drink deep ere they depart."

"It is, perhaps, better for the Regent that their departure should be postponed. The country approves ; and I have at length outgrown that miserable fashion-bondage which renders the decree of the great world the criterion of all opinion."

"I perceive that you sometimes take a favourite's privilege to trifle with it," observed his young friend,—

‘ You throw off the world as a huntsman his pack ;
For you know, when you please, you can whistle it back.’ ”

“ Rather whistle it down the wind for ever,” ejaculated Sheridan fretfully. “ The world, Frank, is a good acquaintance, but a d—d bad friend ; like a hackney-coach, that drives after you, kicking up a dust in sunshiny weather, but is never to be found on a rainy day ! Romilly, who is about to bring in five bills for the mitigation of the criminal laws, had better toss them up with one for the better punishing and repressing of the crime of heartlessness ! ”

“ *You* at least, my dear Sheridan, will have no cause to second the motion against such a vice ! I know no person living so rich in troops of friends as yourself.”

“ Ay, troops ! With the Regent on my side, I am safe ; but let the royal fugleman turn his back, and mark how your ‘ troops ’ would retreat in disorder ! ”

“ But the royal fogleman is your firmest adherent.”

“ Firm

“ As giddy Fortune’s wheel,
That goddess blind
That stands upon the restless rolling stone,”

quoth ancient Pistol. The time will come when these Tory friends and retainers of Carlton House must overgrow and cast out the single poor weed of a faithful Whig, tolerated in one corner of the garden ! There are certain points of disunion betwixt the Prince and myself that will at any moment afford pretexts for a crack or flaw. Against the Princess of Wales, for instance, the Regent is aware that I will never wag a pen or a finger ! Wrong or right, it is not in my nature to take part against a woman.* I should expect the spirits of my mother and my wife to rise up in judgment against me !”

* Sheridan’s real answer to the Prince Regent.

“Then farewell, indeed, the favour of Carlton House!” cried Frank. “Unless I am much mistaken, the Prince was more in awe of the coalesced party, as the supposed partisans of the Princess, than as the foes of Hertford House.”

“A fact proved by his Royal Highness’s selection of the concoctor of ‘the book,’ to become his conscience-keeper; eh?” cried Sheridan with a sneer. “Well! if I ever look for consistency in man or woman, royal, gentle, or simple, again, I am a soused gurnet! and so let Brookes’s have its say, and be d—d to it.”

With all this affected carelessness of public opinion, Frank readily perceived that his friend was cut to the quick by the disapproval of his quondam friends; and still more mortified to feel that there might be cause for their estrangement. In withdrawing himself from the bondage of political life, Frank would

have been glad to retain his full and perfect reverence for one of those master spirits, which cannot fall into decadence without the whole frame of contemporaneous society becoming the sufferer, as the harmony of the spheres ~~were~~ injured by the falling of one of their orbs of light.

CHAPTER XII.

Four legs and two voices !—a most delicate monster !

SHAKESPEARE.

To wait upon the Beckfords uninvited, on the very evening of his arrival at Brighton, seemed unfeasible to the shy English nature of Sir Henry Woodbridge. On the morrow, therefore, spruce, shining, and unstained with travel, he prepared to make his appearance at their door.

At the earliest possible hour at which morning visits are not felt to be an intrusion, Sir Henry came forth accoutred for the assault ; when, as he traversed the long passage of

the hotel, he found himself roughly accosted by the bang-up voice of Tom Hounslow. "Woodbridge, by Jove!" cried the astonished devil-may-care; "I thought I recognised your calash as you drove in last night! Well, what's in the wind in your part of the world? I suppose you know that the jury of the coroner's inquest on Miss Emma Clowance, in ours, brought in their verdict 'wilful murder against Sir Henry Woodbridge, Bart.!'"

" 'Or other persons unknown!'" cried Lord Marytown, filling up the phrase. "I say, old chap! what did you mean by giving us the slip in such a hang-dog way at Doncaster? I had planned to take you wild-duck shooting in the fens, to my cousin Bob Hounslow's, who's got the living of Ditchwell, where he boats to church six months in the year, and keeps a rectory-barge for weddings and funerals."

"Thank you. I prefer spending my autumns high and dry. I don't want to waste

my means in Jesuit's drops. — Good morning !”

“ Not so fast, and not so short, my fine fellow ! Here, you are in for us ! At Brighton, there's no such thing as tipping a particular friend the cold shoulder. Where's Frank Grenfell ?”

“ ‘ Your love says, like an honest gentleman,
Where is your mother ! ’ ”

cried Hounslow, in the squeaking treble of the Nurse of the incomparable Mrs. Davenport.

“ Frank is in Hampshire.”

“ By Jove, I heard he was in office !”

“ In which ? Bow-street or Marlborough ?” inquired the facetious Marytown, addressing his noble friend.

“ In neither, my dear fellow. He leaves them and the Heralds' to you !” retorted Tom angrily. “ But I swear I heard Warkworth (as he sat philandering last night with Miss Grenfell) say something or other to her about

‘ her brother’s envied office.’ Now, there’s no office out of Downing-street that such a *par-chemin maché* fellow as Warkworth is likely to envy !”

“ Oh ! Warkworth is here, is he ?” inquired Sir Henry, no longer attempting to extricate himself from his companions, but sauntering arm-in-arm with them along their daily lounge. “ How has he managed to get away from the House ?”

“ His father got him a certificate, I suppose. Old Teviot’s a great man again now. If Wellesley and Liverpool were to drop, we should have Lord Teviot leader in the House of Lords.”

“ ‘ When rum and gin are gone and spent,
Then gruel is most excellent ! ’ ”

shouted Hounslow. “ Old Teviot is a slower coach than even his son, and he’s as slow as the Exeter waggon.”

“Don’t abuse him!” added Lord Marytown. “His handsome wife will soon make us fancy him as fast as the Highflyer. I bet ten to one that the Countess of Teviot is the finest woman on the bench of peeresses at the next coronation.”

“You’ll make Woodbridge blush if you praise her so!” cried Tom. “You forget that he’s her cousin.”

“And a devilish strong family likeness between them, too!” retorted Marytown; “I vow to God, you and Miss Grenfell are the two stateliest folks of my acquaintance! There’s no getting her into such a thing as a good reel or a good joke. She’s quite a kill-joy to those merry, good-natured girls of Sir William’s.”

“Perhaps Lord Warkworth does not approve of romping,” said Woodbridge bitterly, and feeling in his waistcoat pocket for Frank’s letter, which, but for the presence of his two

blockhead companions, he would fain have flung over the pier.

“ I suppose he will keep a monstrous tight look-out after her, at first. But it won't last, you know. As soon as he gets an appointment, (which, the odds are, will be the first vacant that's worth kissing hands for,) he's just the sort of fussy, fribbly, pragmatistical ass to be never easy without having his finger, not only in every pie, but in every tartlet and cheesecake. Such official men as Castlereagh, and others of the world, are wise enough to follow King Fal's maxim—‘ never to do themselves what others will do for them,—and never to do to-day what they can put off till to-morrow!’ But Warkworth will not only bake his own bread, but thresh his own corn ; and, instead of putting off till to-morrow, he'll have everything swept up the night before. Such a minikin pin of a Cabinet Minister as it will make !”

“Isn’t he d—d bitter?” cried Hounslow, nudging his companion, with a knowing wink. “Can’t you guess why? Warkworth has cut him out with Miss Grenfell! He wanted to make her Lady Marytown, and she wouldn’t have him at no price.”

“I can answer for it that she was not asked!” cried Lord Marytown reddening.

“Come, come, decency! Didn’t you own to me, at dinner, on Wednesday, that you meant to pop the question in the course of the evening?”

“After the popping of a certain number of champagne corks, one doesn’t know what one says. Luckily, my friend Selina Beckford let me into the secret that her friend was engaged, or much the same thing; so that I was spared the shock of having cold water thrown in my face.”

“Or being kept in hot,” added the facetious Mr. Hounslow. “But, whether you popped

or no, I can bear witness that you have never said a civil word of Warkworth since that evening. For my part, I think I shall cut the concern, and bestow myself upon some other mansion than the Beckfords, which shakes to the foundation if one ventures a Highland fling, and has as much cooing going on in it as a pigeon-house."

"Indeed! have my Hampshire neighbours met with their match at last?" inquired Sir Henry, pretending to interest himself in the conversation.

"There's Wexford desperately in love with the eldest; there's the second pairing off with some young Hampshire parson, — Dansom or Danston, or what's his name? — and there's Miss Grenfell, talking political economy, or some such fudge, with her faithful shepherd, the honourable member for Midgehurst. Marytown and I had some thoughts of tossing up for Silvia, since your cousin's off the hooks.

But, now you're come, we'll make her over to you. I'm not sure that she's not the pleasantest of the bunch."

Poor Woodbridge was, by this time, as nearly approaching the cold fit of an ague as if he had passed the winter duck-shooting in Ditchwell Fen. It was his intention, as soon as he could get rid of the two bores who had fastened on him, to order post-horses for town. He would not condemn himself to visit Hursley at such a moment. He would be off again into Leicestershire, to assist John Hartwell in keeping Ebenezer chapels out of the parish, and comforting Donna for the loss of her daughter. Since Bessy was capable of attaching herself to such a thing as Warkworth, she was not worth regretting. He promised himself (while so vivid a flush brightened his cheek as rendered highly welcome the contact of the bleak south-easter so much abhorred by Sir William Beckford,)—he

promised himself, as Sir Robert Crewe might have done, that, upon his soul and honour, he would think of her no more !

His first object was to reach his hotel, that he might pish, pshaw, and pace up and down the room for the exhaustion of the fever quickly succeeding to the shivering fit of his ague, before he shut himself up in a calash for sixty miles' solitary confinement. But Brighton is a place where nothing but the wind of heaven is its own master ! No getting from one end of the Steyne to the other without being seized upon by some hungry idler, or being

———By a mousing owl
Hawked at and killed.

Some stray elderly gentleman airing his pig-tail and digesting his breakfast, or some raw cornet of the Tenth quizzed out of the mess-room, is sure to fasten on the vacant arm, to repeat the news just gleaned at the library

from the morning papers ; or, after examining the Pavilion weathercock, pronounce upon the direction of the wind.

As Woodbridge accordingly was impelled along between his noisy companions,—like a modest maiden lozenge supported between two “salvage men,” or a bear and a wild-boar,—a sober, trimly, middle-aged man in gaiters, who was ambling nimbly on before them, was suddenly hailed by Tom Hounslow.

“How are you, my dear sir?” said he, punching Sir Henry in the side with his elbow, as if to prepare him for a joke. “Any mullets in the market this morning? And what have you done with Warkworth?”

The sober-looking gentleman, who turned round to discover Claudius Markham, the friend and colleague of Lord Teviot, and a very contemptuous countenance, replied that “his young friend was off for town, and that he had the honour of wishing them good day.” But

Hounslow was not the man to be so easily distanced.

“Off to town? The deuce he is! Matters are nearer settled, then, than I supposed?”

“Perfectly to Lord Warkworth’s satisfaction, I believe. I trust they may prove so to Mr. Hounslow’s.”

“Is Warkworth likely to get anything just now *besides* being married?” inquired the delicate Lord Marytown.

“The archbishopric of Canterbury, I believe, unless your lordship has a prior claim to urge,” replied Markham in the same bantering tone.

“Oh, for *my* part, *I* had much rather urge a prior claim upon the lady,” replied Tom, with a knowing wag of the head.

“I fancy the lady is very much at your service,” replied Markham. “I had fancied however, that my young friend was your successor; that is, in the degree in which George

the Third succeeds to William the Conqueror."

"I have not the honour of belonging to so numerous a corporation," replied Hounslow, not altogether pleased with the vein of the pithy official man.

"Sir, you are a bolder or less happy man than I supposed," observed Markham. "I have no doubt Warkworth would rejoice, had he as good a face to bear out his denial."

"Excuse me, sir; my name is Woodbridge!" cried Sir Henry, bursting out with shortened respiration and glowing pace.

"It may be Norval, sir, for anything I care to the contrary," replied the dapper commissioner, fancying himself made the butt of a mystification by one of the devil-may-care companions of Tom Hounslow and Lord Marytown.

"I am the cousin, sir, of Miss Grenfell!" persisted Sir Henry, still raising his voice.

"Or blood-relation to my Lord Donoughmore,"

replied Markham, still determined not to be out-quizzed by some saucy youngster.

“Sir, your age is your protection!” cried Woodbridge in a fury.

“Sir, there is no occasion that it should be yours,” replied Markham stoutly. “I can but be in my second childhood; and, as you appear to be still in your first, the odds are even.”

The angry voice in which Sir Henry replied to this sally, and the vociferous manner in which Hounslow and Marytown affected to interfere, in order to conceal their hope that some such incident as a duel might enliven Brighton at a season unpropitious to prize-fights, began to attract the notice of passers-by.

“What the devil’s the matter?” exclaimed Sir William Beckford, who happened to be bustling past, on his way to his stables, which, with the singular convenience of old Brighton arrangements, were situated a quarter of a mile from his domicile. “Good God! Wood-

bridge, my dear fellow! *you* in Brighton? A quarrel on your hands already, and with that meekest of men, my friend Claudius Markham! How has he affronted you?"

"By insulting, in my presence, the name of a young lady who must be dishonoured by no further allusion in a street squabble," cried Sir Henry.

"Not one of my daughters, I hope?" demanded Sir William in a lower voice, fancying that Sir Henry's scruples arose from delicacy towards himself.

"The *friend* of your daughters."

"My dear Markham! *you* disparage and insult Frank Grenfell's sister?—*you* who were wild last season to marry her to the son of your friend Lord Teviot?"

"And am so still."

"Vouchsafe to say as much to her cousin, Sir Henry Woodbridge here, who fancies that you have been decrying his charming cousin."

“If it were not for the cutting breeze which makes us all look so blue, I should fancy the dog-star raging,” replied Markham calmly. “We seem to be playing a game of cross-purposes.”

And with the aid of a reasonable and temperate man like Sir William, it was soon made clear to all parties, that, though offence had been given and taken, none was intended. Mr. Markham stated himself to have alluded to Lady Mary Russell, and had never in his life breathed the name of Bessy Grenfell, save with admiration and respect.

“Which way are you bound, Woodbridge?” inquired Sir William, feeling that, after so sharp a misunderstanding, the sooner the group was broken up the better.

“To my hotel,” he replied, not choosing to expose to Sir William the motive of his quick return, or that, having travelled one hundred and sixty-four miles to sleep only four-and-

twenty hours in Brighton, he was off again for Leicestershire.

"Come round with me to my stables, then, and we will walk back together," replied Beckford; adding, when out of hearing of Markham and the two noisy young gentlemen so great in the favour of his family, "What in the world, my dear Woodbridge, led you into so gross a confusion between the names or persons of a Lady Mary Russell and Miss Grenfell?"

"Hounslow and Marytown talk so loudly and so loosely that it is not always easy to get at their exact meaning," said he. "It seems they were hoaxing Mr. Markham, and *I* fancied he was hoaxing *me*."

"Claudius Markham hoaxing any one! You remind me of your friend Sheridan, who, when taken up by the watch drunk in the streets, hiccuped out, 'Gentlemen, I am not often in this predicament. My n—n—name is Wilberforce.'"

... brings ...
... anecdote

"I fancy I might have spared my Quixotism," observed Sir Henry, looking unusually tall and magnanimous; "and for the future I shall leave Miss Grenfell's defence in the hands of Lord Warkworth."

"Poor fellow! he has business enough on his hands just now without it," observed Sir William laughing. "If it were any one but such a pompous prig as Warkworth, one might be almost sorry for him."

"Sorry for him!" reiterated Woodbridge, to whom Lord Teviot's son appeared just then the most enviable of human beings.

"It is hard to have a man, who has been shutting his eyes to such things for the last ten years, suddenly turn round and whitewash himself at your expense."

"He is too happy—too fortunate—to care much whom he pays for whitewashing," cried Sir Henry petulantly.

"Why, has he got the appointment?" demanded Beckford, surprised. "It is not in

the Gazette. I knew he was off for town, but I had no idea matters would be settled so soon. It would not have done exactly to thrust him into office at the moment of figuring so discreditably before the public. Official men are not expected to be Scipios, I suppose ; and Russell has literally reduced himself to such a cipher in his own house, that the world has no more sympathy with him than with a tom-tit. But yet"——

"You don't mean to say," interrupted Woodbridge, "that, at the moment of his marriage, Warkworth has been entangled in any scrape with the Russells?"

"You don't mean to say that, at the moment of his blow-up with Russell, Warkworth is in for a marriage?" demanded Sir William, in his turn, with equal wonderment.

"One or other, or both of us, is in the wrong box," added he, perceiving that Sir Henry Woodbridge was agitated as well as astonished.

“ The long and the short of the matter is, that Russell, who has been allowing his wife to talk politics, sentiment, and philosophy with the three regiments of Guards, and two Houses of Parliament, ever since they married, has suddenly started up into an Othello. The Père Elisée, who has lately taken the little gentleman in hand, has been giving him *douches* and *eau médicinale* till he grew vial-valiant, and one fine evening sallied forth from his dressing-room in his nankin dressing-gown, and insisted upon kicking Warkworth out of the house. After an attempt at the effort, he fell breathless into the arms of his attendants, as the stage directions instruct Sir Giles Overreach. Lady Mary insisted upon his apologising both to her and the innocent youth he had insulted ; and next day Lord Teviot, finding the matter the joke of the clubs, got him a fortnight’s holidays, and packed him down to recruit his character at Brighton till the breeze

blew over. Warkworth swore he was a ruined man. But though little scrapes of that description were apt to throw a man into disgrace at Windsor, for candour's sake let us conclude that Carlton House will be more lenient. I really don't see that such a slice of crimped skate as Lord Warkworth will make the worse junior Lord of the Admiralty for having entertained a Platonic attachment for Lady Mary Russell."

"He will make a less respectable husband for Miss Grenfell," added Sir Henry sternly.

"For Miss Grenfell?—Lord Warkworth a husband for Miss Grenfell? Why, he owned to me himself that she had refused his offers twenty times over!"

"Did he admit that she had accepted him on the twenty-first?"

"If he had sworn to it, I should not have believed him. Woodbridge, you have no right to think so ill of your cousin."

"Is there any moral turpitude, then, in

Miss Grenfell's becoming the wife of Warkworth?"

"Not unless she were attached to another man."

"She *is* attached, then?"

"You are better able to answer the question than myself. When your cousin found poor Warkworth sent to Coventry here by all the cursed prudish spinsters and dowagers who infest Brighton, she was good-natured enough to notice him; and I taxed her as a friend with the imprudence of hazarding her heart"—

"Her heart!"

"To which she answered that I, who was in her secrets, ought to be well aware that her heart was no longer in her own keeping, to be endangered; and that she owed some civility to Warkworth for his disinterested attachment last year. I fancy they understood each other, for he praised her to me as a noble-hearted creature, and admitted that he was too presuming in having pretended to such a wife."

“Is it far to your stables?” inquired Sir Henry suddenly. “I am in haste to pay my compliments to Lady Beckford and her daughters.”

“And visitor, eh?—You are not going to omit Miss Grenfell, I hope?”

“Certainly not : I have news for her of her brother. Frank’s marriage is settled, and his prospects are comfortably secured.”

“So soon? I am heartily glad to hear it ; and, if you’ll step with me round by the stables, (where I must see Selina’s mare, which has strained her shoulder, and is in a very uncomfortable way,) I’ll go back with you to the Steyne to communicate the glad tidings.”

Sir Henry would not hear of troubling him ; and the good-humoured Baronet, beginning to see matters in a clearer light, recommended him to make the best of his way to pay his compliments to Lady Beckford.

They were soon paid. Young Grenfell’s

letter was delivered, and perused with a grateful blush by the noble girl, to whose countenance recent afflictions had imparted a touch of sensibility that completed the perfection of its beauty. Never, in fact, had Bessy Grenfell looked more lovely than when, placing her hand frankly in that of her cousin, she admitted that, since her brother decided that the objections of Lady Mary Woodbridge ought not to remain a bar to their mutual happiness, she would no longer withhold the confession of her perfect affection for one by whom she was thus disinterestedly distinguished.

Heartily did the Beckfords rejoice in the triumph of Sir Henry, and the charming neighbour thus secured to Oak Hill. The girls recollected with glee the fine grand pianoforte originally placed in the saloon at Hursley on their account, and felt that, in one house of the neighbourhood at least, they were still secure of their favourite amusement. Though Silvia smiled with superior consciousness that

Captain Wexford had privately informed her Sir Henry was a bit of a spoon, and though Mary thought him a far less well-informed man than John Danston, he was cordially invited to make the house as much as possible his home during the impending negotiations with Lady Mary.

It was scarcely to be expected that Lady Mary Woodbridge would retire defeated from the field without striking a blow. The "most unhappy of mothers, and most injured of women," assured by Sir Robert Crewe that, "upon his soul and honour! it was time to set some bounds to the encroachments of the Grenfells," could scarcely do less than expatiate into a voluminous correspondence with all and sundry who had intermeddled in her son's affairs, proclaiming her wrongs, and enforcing her denunciations.

At length, as was her usual resource in every family emergency, she summoned her brother to her aid. But Lord Clangarvan,

after a diligent perusal of parchments, and winnowing of wills, was compelled to admit that her ladyship's kingdom was taken from her, and her jurisdiction at an end ; and that, so far from having authority to interdict any marriage Sir Henry might be disposed to form, her utmost prerogative extended to remaining at Hursley Park, which her son and daughter-in-law were at liberty to render as disagreeable to her as was agreeable to them.

His lordship, assuming his most serious privy-council face, recommended her therefore to gather together her lustring weeds, and fall with decency. It was better to consent with a good grace to that which she could not prevent ; and when, in the flurry of her deliberations, Julia Loveden rode over one morning from Raynham Lodge to lavish her powers of persuasion, and invite her ladyship to the gay wedding which on the following week was to convert her into Mrs. Francis Grenfell, the news that her nephew was about to settle in

life on an income of twelve hundred a year, (the origin of which, as it was not expounded by Miss Loveden, it was natural to attribute to official emolument, which inferred the continuance of his personal favour with the Regent,) the certainty that her son was freed from the burthen of his cousin's maintenance, and the hope that Grenfell's interest might eventually secure the Hursley peerage, determined her to give in. Nay, on learning from Miss Loveden that, in case of the continuance of her wrath, Miss Grenfell was to remove to the house of the Earl of Waterton for the solemnization of her marriage, she declared that it would be an "unheard-of outrage to the memory of Sir Gideon Woodbridge, if his only son and only niece were to be united in the bonds of matrimony otherwise than by special licence and under his roof, and that Hursley Park must be the place!"

In another week, therefore, Bessy was brought back in triumph by the Beckfords

to the home which was to be henceforward her own, in time to act as bridesmaid to her sister-in-law, and be witness to the vows pronounced by her darling brother at the altar to become the best of husbands, and at the feet of his Julia to become the best of Chancery lawyers.

The Beckford girls resigned, without repining, a last fortnight at Brighton, in order to be present at the brilliant ceremony at Raynham Lodge. But a far more solemn ceremonial graced, in spite of their remonstrances, the union of Sir Henry and his cousin; and it was only on condition that Sir Robert Crewe was to be pacified with the show of an invitation, that Lady Mary consented to abate a discharge of artillery, and a lighting of bonfires, such as had never yet frightened the Hamadryads of Hampshire from their hop-poles.

The good-humoured Graces of Oak Hill had, however, little to lament in so abruptly quitting Brighton, and bidding adieu to the devil-

may-cares. The weddings of their young friends Julia and Bessy were but the prelude to their own. Two of the bridesmaids became brides before the waning of Lady Woodbridge's honey-moon ; and though Selina was luckily left to wear white gloves for Mrs. John Danston and Mrs. Wexford, the grace of her deportment at the Hursley Park bridal so won upon the admiration of John Hartwell, by whom the ceremony was performed, that he has acquainted his two pupils in confidence that, on the falling-in of the living of Hursley, he shall look for his Deborah Primrose at Oak Hill.

This circumstance is, in fact, the only one wanting to complete the satisfaction of the neighbourhood ; for Sir Robert Crewe, K.C.B. was soon raised to the summit of his glory by an appointment to the government of Bermuda, a favour strongly surmised to be the fruit of a hollow peace patched up between Raynham Lodge and the CABINET MINISTERS.

CHAPTER XIII.

Who would depend upon the popular grace
That hath at length beheld Sejanus fall ?
He had our servile nobles waiting him
As common grooms, all hanging on his looks
No less than human life on destiny ;
And this man fell, yea, fell without a look
That durst appear his friend, or lend so much
Of vain relief to his changed state, as pity.
They that before like gnats play'd in his beams,
And throng'd to circumscribe him, now not seen
Deigning to hold a common seat with him.
Others that waited him unto the senate
Now inhumanely ravish him to prison,
And, stead of wreaths, give fetters !

BEN JONSON's *Sejanus*.

Few lessons are more ripe with instruction
than the examination of factions and coteries
at successive epochs. By tracing effects to
their causes, and following up causes to their

effects, we learn to assign a true value to human pretences; and since "the boy is father to the man," it is good to scrutinize the boyhood of men whose works are before us, in order that we may infer wisely from the boyhood of boys. But, to perfect our knowledge, the strange eventful history of life must be traced to its close; and it is "a lesson worth a thousand homilies," to record that Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the adulated and adulating of royalty, the darling of noble pleasure-seekers and boon-companion of the great, was abandoned in his latter days to the iron grasp of penury,—arrested on his death-bed, — *arrested in his coffin!*

Had the high faculties of this memorable man—

Who, born for the universe, narrowed his mind,
And to "Fashion" gave up what was meant for mankind,—

been applied to some professional career consistent with the sphere of his birth, he might have attained, as a legist, the overgrown opu-

lence of a Stowell or an Eldon ;—as a divine, of a Normanton or a Barrington.

But it was his rash choice to flutter, an idler among the great ; converting the sterling ore of his genius into glittering trinkets, rather than current coin. Regardless whether the tree of fame had taken permanent root, he amused himself with snatching flowers from the bough ; destroying the germ of future fruit and solid prosperity. The noisy promises of pompous patrons overpowered at once the still, small voice within, and nullified the glowing exhortations of the Muse, by whose hand he had been raised from obscurity and guided on the road to glory.

And who, after all, were the friends assembled round the care-crazed pillow of the dying Sheridan ? — The Prince, to whom he had sacrificed his time and his talents ? — The dukes and marquises, who had waned in his prodigality, gracing their sullen satiety with the flashes of his wit ? No ! At the eleventh hour, as at the

first, it was still the lyre and laurel that brightened his existence. Canning, Holland, Moore, Rogers, congenial spirits, and votaries of the same faith, soothed the sorrows of the wit, the poet, and the orator, long after the broken plaything of Carlton House had been flung aside into the dust.

It is true; the pitiful almoner of royalty came at length with his tardy dole; while half the peers of the realm thronged to his bier, to catch a last reflection from the brightness of his fame. But the alms of the Regent were rejected by the self-respect of Sheridan's family, that one of the most inconstant of princes might not enjoy the vain pretence of having bestowed so much as a draught of water upon his expiring friend. But why enlarge on all this? The meanness of the false friends of poor Brinsley is transmitted to posterity in one of the noblest satires which have burst from the indignant soul of Poetry since the days of Juvenal.*

* Moore's Monody.

*My history has been
written in the most
simple and unassuming
manner.*

Among the private friends who soothed his sickness, and shed an honest tear at his pompous interment, was Francis Grenfell; at that time a rising young lawyer, who, in his tranquil, domestic retirement, moralized with equal grief and gratitude upon the lesson afforded him. Even such a destiny — thanks to the prudence and affection of his Julia! — had he escaped. Stimulated by the encouragement of his wife and sister, he was toiling up the steep ascent, whose summit is only to be attained by the stoutest perseverance. Self-exiled from the festivities of Carlton House, Frank had become the patient, plodding lawyer,—the happy husband, — the cheerful father.

A memorable display of his ability in a celebrated trial proved the means of opening to Frank those avenues to parliamentary distinction from which he stood excluded. Sir Henry Woodbridge's interest at Swansborough had been overlaid by the weight of the Treasury purse and the booby younger son

of a Tory marquis; and Grenfell was now too wise to desire that his brother-in-law should vacate in his favour his seat for Dronington; for not a member of the Whig party,—not a man in the House,—more efficiently valuable to the country than he who, under the name of Woodbridge, has figured in these pages.

The eloquence of Serjeant Grenfell effected what that all but omnipotent agent, borough-mongery, had failed to effect. At the next dissolution he was brought into the House by one of those noble and disinterested borough-holders whose influence was devoted to the friends of their country, rather than to their Wronghead cousins and younger brothers. Once seated, Grenfell forbore to thrust himself into notice till his modest diligence had conquered the esteem of his colleagues; and the ear of parliament was consequently his own in even the first of those luminous harangues, which, illustrating without retarding the progress of debate, have had so

large a share in establishing the existing form of legislation. Grenfell proved a great reformer ; a great one, because a wise and cautious,—neither tamed by hereditary prejudices, nor inflamed by a vulgar appetite for applause.

Foremost among his opponents at every period of his career, whether as lawyer or legislator, was the empty disciple of Peter Hartwell. Lord Warkworth detested Francis Grenfell as a man, and dreaded him as a politician. Time, which causes the beard of the kidling to sprout, and forces even chickweed into flower, had imparted to his lordship's countenance a species of grave no-meaning, which the vulgar mistook for the indication of a reflective mind. With the many, his scraps of classical quotation, picked cold from the trencher of foregone politicians, passed for scholarship ; while a certain pomposity of gait told wonderfully on levee-days, especially when illustrated by some symbolic wand of office.

Throughout the Regency, the green growth of this blade of artificial grass was leant upon

as solid timber. Even a thing so devoid of faculty as Lord Warkworth may, by force of early habit, be trained into the routine of business; and there was a fussy assiduity in his courtiership, which was honoured as loyal zeal at Carlton House. While Lord Castlereagh was supported by family influence of a peculiar nature, Lord Teviot and his son were supported by the friendship of Castlereagh; and, after that statesman's lamentable end, their serviceability and favour with the King recommended them to successive heads of the administration.

With respect to the old Earl, indeed, it would have been as easy to overthrow the unsightly old gateway at the bottom of St. James's Street, as extirpate his time-honoured name from the Red-book; for he was one of those on whom, however undeservedly, the glory of the sun of Waterloo shed one of its straggling beams. But his fulness of years and salary was at length accomplished; and a right-worthy successor prosed in the Upper House in

his stead. It was rumoured by the way among the dowagers, his contemporaries, that his lordship's untimely death (at seventy-four) was occasioned by the irritation of seeing the widow of a certain Mr. Russell become Viscountess Warkworth ; but the solemn decorum of the new Earl and Countess, and the excellence of their dinners, strangled this puny scandal in the birth.

For several succeeding years, whatever name might figure at the head of the administration, that of the Earl of Teviot was sure to stand opposite to numerals implying an appointment of three or four thousand a year, as a lord of something or other,—the first lord of the Treasury knew what ; till by degrees his length of service, such as it was, entitled him to become a Marquis and a Cabinet Minister !

John Hartwell's double prediction was shortly afterwards fully accomplished : for, lo ! his right reverend cousin Peter shook the powder from an episcopal wig by the obsequiousness of his congees, in gratitude for a promotion by

Lansdowne

which the Marquis of Teviot secured a new vote upon the Bench.

“How can you expect Lord Teviot to be otherwise than vindictive against us?” cried Mrs. Grenfell to her brother-in-law, Sir Henry Woodbridge, one vacation, when the two happy families of Woodbridge and Grenfell were united together at Hursley Park, and one of the coarse parliamentary attacks of the pompous Marquis came to be discussed by the fireside. “As his successful rival in love and war, with Bessy and the public, you, my dear Sir Henry, have no chance of forgiveness.”

“I trust we may all survive the virulence of his personality!” added Grenfell earnestly; “but I own it fires my blood to find the opposition of this narrow-minded blockhead to every measure calculated to forward the interests of humanity, to limit the encroachments of Government, or the extension of the prerogative, hailed by the country as patriotism, and by the court as loyalty! As Timon of Athens said of his loving countrymen”—

“ Never mind what Timon said of his loving countrymen !” gaily interrupted the beautiful Julia. “ Timon had some excuse for his misanthropy,—unblest, like certain persons, with three promising children and a Chancery practice of five thousand a year. Grudge not, my dear Frank !—grumble not ! ‘ *Le bon temps viendra.*’ The country is not yet sufficiently blind for its cataract to be extractable. There must be a worse before there comes a better. But be assured the throne of Lord Teviot and the Tories is already crumbling under their weight.”

Within twelve months of Mrs. Grenfell’s prophecy, England suddenly acquired new powers of vision. The prudent successor of George IV, enlightened by the event of the French Revolution, and awed by the overclouding of the political sky throughout Europe, saw fit to set up a conductor beside his own powder magazine, and the bold and steady hand of Sir Francis Grenfell was one of those selected for the arduous task.

“So, so!—It is worth while to have a brother-in-law in power!” cried the worthy Rector of Hursley to his pupil and patron, on Sir Henry Woodbridge’s return to Hampshire, after that memorable session. “Dronington in Schedule A, and Swansborough in Schedule B, eh? and your name not in the list of the new batch of Peers! What is my friend Sir Francis about?”

“Doing his duty,” replied Sir Henry, “and satisfying our utmost expectations. A peerage (as, by your knowing looks, I perceive you are aware,) was offered me, *not* by the ministers, but by the King. But as my poor mother no longer lives to be troubled by my refusal, and I have a wife above all paltry solicitude for coronation honours, we have chosen to remain as we are. The tranquil death-bed of my poor friend Danston, last year, taught me more forcibly than all former lessons to fling away ambition. I would fain enjoy in my latter days, as he did, the consciousness of having bounded my desires and efforts to my allotted

sphere and capacities. Never shall I forget the expression of the old man's countenance when solemnly appealing to his sons as friends, and to ourselves as neighbours, whether he had 'done his duty in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call him ?' "

" It is not always easy to set boundaries to the sphere assigned us," observed the Rector gravely.

" At all events, my dear fellow," cried Sir Henry, " Nature never intended me for a statesman ; and luckily no Peter Hartwell was set over my boyhood to inflate me like a balloon with empty learning by which to ascend over the heads of my wondering fellow-countrymen."

" I was certain," cried Hartwell warmly, " that the coronet to which you had not worked your way, would have no attractions for you ! At some future time, however, Frank will have claims to ennoblement."

" Time enough *then*," interrupted Sir Henry, " to determine whether the state of his own and

the country's fortunes is such as to justify his acceptance. Meanwhile we shall jog on our road together, serving each, in his degree, the cause of the nation and of humanity. May you, my dear Hartwell, survive to set up as epitaph over our graves in Hursley Church the lamentation for Saul and Jonathan! Such a distinction were, in my estimation, fifty-fold more valuable than to figure in superannuated Red-books and existing Pension-lists as My Lord Marquis of Carrabas, a retired CABINET MINISTER!"

THE END.

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